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MISS ELSIE WAS VERY MUCH ENGAGED. Page 298.

JOHN REMINGTON, MARTYR

BY

MRS. G. R. ALDEN (*Pansy*)

AND

MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON

Authors of
"Profiles," "Divers Women," "Modern Prophets," "Aunt Hannah and Martha and John," etc.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

A NARROW DOOR 9

CHAPTER II.

MADE OVER 26

CHAPTER III.

TO THE FRONT 40

CHAPTER IV.

HOW ONE WORKER WAS MADE . . . 55

CHAPTER V.

A PROMISE FULFILLED 67

CHAPTER VI.

"IT HAS HAPPENED" 79

CHAPTER VII.

IS THERE ANY HELP? 88

CHAPTER VIII.

"IN BONDS" 105

CHAPTER IX.

A MODEL CHURCH 119

CHAPTER X.

ONE EVENING 132

CHAPTER XI.

"NO!" 146

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE JOHN 157

CHAPTER XIII.

A LITTLE TRAVELER 170

CHAPTER XIV.

SUSPENSE 186

CHAPTER XV.

"WE'VE GOT HIM!" 199

CHAPTER XVI.

PRESENTIMENTS 213

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPLICATIONS 227

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN "APRIL FOOL" 241

CHAPTER XIX.

MIDNIGHT 255

CHAPTER XX.

PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS 270

CHAPTER XXI.

PLAIN SPEAKING 285

CHAPTER XXII.

TWO "SIMPLETONS" 300

CHAPTER XXIII.

FORESHADOWINGS 315

CHAPTER XXIV.

"IT IS VERY STRANGE!" 330

CHAPTER XXV.

AT LAST 345

CHAPTER XXVI.

SELFISHNESS AND SELF-ABNEGATION . . 360

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE NIGHT COMETH" 376

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE UPPER CHAMBER 390

CHAPTER XXIX.

"OTTISSEY FIRST" 403

JOHN REMINGTON, MARTYR.

CHAPTER I.

A NARROW DOOR.

WHEN John Remington's city church had invited him to resign after a brief pastorate, he was dismayed for a time; but an unswerving trust, aided by youth and a sanguine temperament, soon triumphed over despondency.

"It must be all for the best or it would not have happened," he told himself, "for I was true to my convictions of duty; I could not act differently in the points wherein I offended if I were to go over it again, unless, indeed, I failed in tact. I might have spoken with more wisdom often had I known how, I daresay, but, after all, any preacher who maintains the principles of total abstinence and enmity to the rum traffic will not

be tolerated long in that church. Perhaps that is the way it is to be purified. Man after man is to go to them preaching the truth fearlessly, allowing himself to be humiliated and cast out — an utter sacrifice, if need be. Why not? The servant is not above his Lord."

And so the young minister was not utterly cast down when he found himself established for a time, on a farm in the home of his boyhood, with the old aunt who had reared him. It was truly blessed to cast off all care — to harness old Dolly and jog through the green country with his wife, to lie under the trees in the orchard and read, to watch the sunrisings and sunsettings, to rest, soul and body, and let nature minister to him and whisper comforting things by means of sweet breezes, songs of birds and breath of flowers. What other medicine is half so soothing to a wounded spirit?

There was another new joy, too, to engage his thoughts, something that had never come into a summer heretofore — little John.

So the days flew by; happy golden time when husband and wife had leisure for long, pleasant talks, and opportunity to discover and admire all the marvelous tricks and ways which a first baby is sure to possess; the days which Aunt Hannah had long ago dreamed of, when John should bring home a wife, and the wide old house should be filled with a pleasant bustle, with snatches of song and laughter and baby cooings. Aunt Hannah

was happy. It was almost as good as being a real grandmother.

John Remington had felt quite hopeful that by the time the month of rest he had allowed himself should expire there would be open doors from which to choose a field of labor. He had sent letters to friends in all directions and asked brethren in the ministry to bear him in mind for a vacant field. But as the month stretched itself into three and no door opened, even so much as a crack, his heart would grow heavy at times, despite a strong courage. It came about that the chief interest of the day centered in mail-time. Each morning he waited for the fateful hour with feverish eagerness, only to feel the heart-sickness which belongs to hope deferred. Every letter was sure to begin with "I regret," etc. By some strange providence there seemed to be no niche for him. Here he was, young and strong, prepared for work, and no work wanted him. He grew almost irritable at the situation, and occasionally a half-suspicion crossed his mind that perhaps his radical views had led some of his conservative brethren, strong in influence, to decline to speak the magic word that might open doors to important fields, lest it be not quite prudent. Indeed, he had heard that one of them remarked of him, "When that young man gets the corners rubbed off and learns not to run against long-established prejudices, he will make a useful minister."

The waiting and the suspense and the sense of humiliation became almost intolerable at times to this sensitive soul. No one can understand the keenness of the trial unless he has experienced it. The lawyer and the physician waiting for clients and patients expect delays and know nothing of the wounded spirit of one who has equipped himself for the work of the ministry, and then, his whole soul filled with zeal and energy, finds himself idle, not even an opportunity to give a sample of his preaching.

He thought within himself that he would offer to go as a missionary to the frontier but for the fact that his wife's mother had long been an invalid, and looked forward to frequent visits from her daughter as one of her chief joys. He could not think it right to put two thousand miles between them.

Martha Remington entered her husband's study one morning — a cosey little room sacred to the memory of Aunt Hannah's husband — and found her minister leaning on the table, his bowed head in his hands. Her loving brown eyes were clear-sighted. She read at once that an additional burden had fallen upon him, although he raised his head quickly and forced a smile.

"What is it, John?" she asked.

"Only the old story, dear. I had strong hopes of being invited to the church in Renwick, but this letter tells me that they have secured Graham,

of my class. It is selfish to fret over that. If I were in, Graham would be out."

"No, don't fret over anything," said the bright-faced young wife, "but be glad that we are together and well. Aunt Hannah loves to have us with her. Why can you not wait patiently? something will surely come before long. Here it comes now, perhaps. There is Peter with the letters," and she tripped downstairs to meet him, soon returning with a letter.

She stood at the back of her husband's chair, looking over his shoulder while he read, expectancy on her face.

The letter was from Dr. Brown, a prominent divine who had now taken it upon himself to lecture Mr. Remington in several closely written pages.

"You will find, my young brother," he wrote, "as you grow older, that the pulpit is not the place for riding hobbies. Your business is to preach the gospel, and not attempt to mould men's opinions upon all subjects or to controvert them. Dissension in the Church is ever to be deplored, and he who would be most useful must study the things that make for peace. To speak plainly, my dear brother, you must avoid that narrowness of mind and uncharity of spirit which sit in judgment upon all opinions that do not coincide with your own, and which render you an unsafe man in an important church. If you wish to succeed, don't meddle

too much with certain issues. Steer clear of the liquor and wage questions. Discussing them can do no good, but will create strong prejudice against you. Of course, things are not just as any of us would like to have them, but we must make the best of it. We must do our work and let others solve perplexing problems pertaining to the laws," etc.

The letter ended with a statement that the church at Stony Ridge had been in a dying condition for some time, but that it needed resuscitating, and was just the thing for him if he was anxious for work. The Board would give two hundred dollars toward the salary if the people would raise two hundred more. Of course, it would require self-denial to live on such a sum, but it could be done, as he himself had proved some forty years ago, and youth was the time to endure hardship.

"This means," said John Remington, as he folded the letter, "that Dr. Brown thinks I should be starved into more moderation of spirit. He says not a word concerning two churches to which I asked to be introduced. He calls my denunciation of sin 'riding a hobby.' He means that I should be tolerant toward church-members who rent buildings for liquor saloons, but I will never, so help me God, church or no church, life or death, cease to call sin by its right name."

"Amen!" said his wife, folding both arms about his neck.

There was silence between them for a minute, then Martha said:

"I'm afraid I can't get up any right frame of mind toward Dr. Brown. I find myself wanting to say like those naughty children, long ago: 'Go up, thou bald head!'"

"Don't yield to it, dear, else two bears named Spite and Gloom will come out of the woods and devour you," her husband said, as he reached and brought her face round between his two hands close to his own. "Dearest, we must rise above all this. We must. If our religion is genuine, it will be proved in just such times as we are passing through this summer."

"Yes, I know we must. But, John, don't go to that little back Stony-something place where he wants to banish you. Don't! Go to Patagonia or the Hawaiian Islands first. Don't be ordered about by him as if he were Pope." And the eyes of the minister's wife were not soft as she said it.

Her husband's eyes were half-amused, half-sad, as he looked fondly down at her.

"Perhaps, dear, Stony Ridge must come into our lives to transfigure them, to make you and me able to re-present our Lord."

"O! John, you do not need it. You are good already. But me — I shall never have any grace to boast of."

"May you never!" said John.

"But you really will not think of going there, to a forlorn little place like that?"

"Not if the Master sent me word to go?"

"But he would not send word by Dr. Brown."

"O, Martha!"

An old church may be a picturesque object, and it may not. It depends upon whether it be of stone with moss and ivy creeping over turrets and towers, or whether it be a wooden, box-like structure, streaked and weather-beaten, with dilapidated roof, broken windows and tumble-down steps.

Of the latter sort was the one church in the straggling village of Stony Ridge. In its best days it could have laid claim to nothing higher than respectability, as it belonged to a denomination which, solid and true though it be, does not suffer from an excess of architectural taste. A wide-spreading elm had done what it could to soften the bareness and squareness of the building, and there used to be green grass in front, but it was now grown up to burdock and Canada thistles. The forlornness of it all expressed as plainly as words could, the discouraged state of the church. In fact, the whole village was discouraged. Death had taken the old stand-bys, others had removed to the cities, and young people seemed to make it the one aim of their lives to get out of Stony Ridge. So it turned out that

the maintenance of the church, which once was strong and prosperous, now depended upon a few faint and feeble-hearted folk who seemed to have lost ambition to do the little they could. The congregation had dwindled to a mere handful, and when at last the old minister died, little, if any effort had been made to secure another. The church had been closed for many months now, and the little parish had become quite accustomed to silent Sabbaths.

On one of those summer Sabbath afternoons an old woman came out of a gray old house and took her way across the fields in the direction of the church. She cast furtive glances about her, as if to make sure that no prying eyes were watching, then pulled a key from her pocket and fitted it into the rusty lock of the church door. Entering, she locked it behind her and walked slowly down the aisle to a pew at the farther end. If Mrs. Blake's neighbors had known that she came often to the lonely church and spent an hour in silent worship, they would have shaken their heads and murmured : "She's queer."

This afternoon she opened her old Bible to well-known passages — texts of revered ministers who had long been gone. Memory brought back instructing or comforting words treasured through the years. As she mused over them her soul was uplifted and nourished as when she had first heard them. She opened her hymn-book and read

several hymns, and then, although her lips made no sound, refreshed her heart by singing the hymn beginning, "I love thy church, O God," to the sweetly flowing tune of Seir.

So many memories the old tune stirred. She lived over the long past years. She was a girl again in the choir. Over there was David's seat. He used to watch her while she sang, then wait for her and walk home through the meadows. There she and David stood when they were married, and there at last under the pulpit lay dear David in his long sleep, and she heard again, as she heard it that day, the low, sweet singing as if from far off: "I know that my Redeemer lives." Here was a little footstool that each baby sat on when it toddled first to church. They were all gone now — old minister, babies and David; only the dear church was left, and there were rumors that it was to be sold. Must it be?

She fell on her knees and poured out her griefs and fears in prayer. It was the experience of the old prophets finding words again, for, regardless of all restraints, her voice, broken and pleading, sounded through the empty church:

"I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thine honor dwelleth. . . . Why is the house of God forsaken? Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee."

Was the shaft of light from the setting sun which streamed through the dusty window and

rested like a halo upon the bowed gray head an earnest of the blessing that was to come?

A few days afterward John Remington stood one Saturday afternoon in the church at Stony Ridge. The sun streamed in through unblinded windows, revealing walls stained by leaks in the roof, bare floors and long lengths of rusty stove-pipe in all their forlornness. The pulpit was high, with steep steps; the cushion worn and faded. Could anything be more wretched, thought the young minister.

Not so did it appear to Mrs. Blake, who was acting the part of sexton. The old church was glorified in her eyes, for once more there stood in it one of God's servants. Her prayer had been answered, her heart sang for joy, her face shone.

"The very dust is sort o' precious," she murmured, as she shook out her dusting-rag.

Mrs. Blake had trudged many a mile that week to spread the notice far and wide that there would be preaching on the following Sabbath. When the morning had really come, and a respectable congregation were gathered, she sat trembling with delight as she joined her quavering voice in the first hymn. Surely it was a day to sing —

> "How pleasant, how divinely fair,
> O Lord of hosts, thy dwellings are."

The remnants of a choir had been mustered, and they had asked the privilege of selecting the

first two hymns lest the strange minister might chance upon a tune which was not in their répertoire. The first two lines were such a sarcasm on the dreary surroundings that Mr. Remington forgot where he was, and found himself smiling. But then Mrs. Blake as she sang had no reference to earthly "dwellings." It was the unseen and the beyond.

The sermon was simple and earnest, suited to the needs of the hearers and refreshing to the heart of at least one old saint as cold water to a thirsty traveler.

At the close of service Mr. Remington laid before the congregation the proposition of the Board that if the church would raise two hundred dollars it should be supplemented by two hundred more to secure preaching at least a part of the time.

"Do not suppose, my friends," he said, "that I have selfish motives in this. I am simply here to help you get on your feet again."

There was the usual long silence with which any proposition is met in some country churches. Then Deacon Graves, a farmer, with small eyes close together, who made a good living and had money in the bank, said he didn't see how it was to be done; that there were only a few in that church to bear all the burdens. He was willing to do his part — and that would be an infinitesimal part— but winter would be coming on before long, and it would take a good deal of wood to warm the

old place. And why was it not just as well to read a sermon at home as it was to be at so much expense that they were not able to meet?

Deacon Graves had been the mouthpiece of that church for years. What he opposed could not succeed. In another moment a little wizened-up man who had just life enough to make motions would be sure to pop up and say, "I move we adjourn," and the short fat man by his side who always did that work would say in a wheezy voice, "I second the motion." A few scared hands would be half-way lifted in assent, and the thing would be done.

In the silence a tall, white-haired woman, with strong features and youthful eyes, stood up and began to speak. There was a decided sensation. The sisters' voices were never heard in the conclaves of that church. It was Mrs. Blake. But what was she saying? Like a prophetess of old her voice rang out, clear, and with a sort of majesty which deep feeling produces in the voices of some persons.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the house of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee. . . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell

in the tents of wickedness. . . . For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. . . . Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together; . . . We will not forsake the house of God. Brothers and sisters," she added, "these words say all that is in my heart far better than I could. I will be glad to give fifty dollars of the two hundred if you will make up the rest; and I'll divide my wood with the church, too. It won't be a burden; it'll be a dear privilege."

Amazement sat on every face. No amount of good old-fashioned manners could hinder every eye in that church from turning itself to rest upon Mother Blake. They all knew she was poor. She had worn the same faded shawl and old bonnet — always, it seemed. How could she give so much? It was just because of wearing the old shawl and bonnet that she could. Not one, even of the most inquisitive of Stony Ridge dwellers, knew that Mrs. Blake had a well-to-do niece, whose benevolence supplied her each year with fifty dollars for clothing.

By means of much skillful management on the part of the minister, which would have done credit to an accomplished financier, and some effective exhortations on the duty of each one to give something, if it were but a dime, and to give as they had been prospered, a little more than the required

amount was pledged, in sums of from one to twenty dollars, Deacon Graves giving exactly ten times as much as he ever had before. Some of the officers waked up, too, and asked the minister to preach to them as long as he could.

Mr. Remington was one of those men who can not see a broken-down anything, whether it were a church or a man, without having his sympathies enlisted at once to try to save. After a month of preaching on Sabbath and visitation about the surrounding country, he felt assured that there was a future for the church, especially as it was quite certain that a factory was to be established there at an early day. He began to ponder upon ways and means for improving the building. His mind filled with the idea, he strolled out one morning to take a look at the dilapidated structure. Gazing up at it reflectively, he became conscious of the presence of another person. The two men were not acquainted, though each knew the other at a glance. Mr. Remington knew that the rather stout man with florid complexion and iron-gray hair and beard was Mr. Hargrave, owner of large quarries and dealer in stone in the city he had himself just left, and Mr. Hargrave knew the history of the Kensett Square Church and the reasons for the young pastor's dismissal.

Mr. Hargrave had come up to Stony Ridge to look after an old farm to which he had lately fallen

heir, and to consider the feasibility of establishing a quarry on some of its granite hills.

"Pretty well played out, isn't it?" he said, nodding toward the church, after they had shaken hands and introduced themselves.

"Yes," Mr. Remington replied, "but it is not hopeless. They tell me the frame is good. Some new shingles and paint would make a vast difference with it. The steps need repairing, too. It is strange somebody has not done that before. A few boards and nails would make that all right in a short time. I could do it myself. I am going to try to help them to some repairs — raise a little money for them, if possible."

Mr. Hargrave had met with some experiences which made him cynical toward ministers. He believed that many of them were instrumental in binding heavy burdens upon churches which they themselves would not lift with one of their fingers. He had made his fortune by hard work, and had almost a contempt for one who could not or would not work with his hands. There was a facetious side to him, too, which enjoyed a bit of humor. He expected the next minute to be asked for a large donation to this church — ministers were not at all backward in that way. But John Remington seemed to have no intention of that kind at present. He was examining the support of the steps with a critical air. Mr. Hargrave looked at the white hands and well-fitting black suit of the

minister, then, with a half-malicious twinkle in his eye, said:

"You think you could do it yourself, do you? I'll give you two days to finish the job. If it's well done and you do it, I'll pay for the lumber and nails, and give you a check of two hundred dollars to fix up the church."

"Agreed!" said the minister, with a flash in his eye that Mr. Hargrave liked.

CHAPTER II.

MADE OVER.

MR. REMINGTON invested a small sum in a pair of overalls, secured his lumber and tools, took off his coat, and went to work. Thanks to Aunt Hannah's training, the work was not so new to him as might have been supposed, and the job was finished at the specified time, to Mr. Hargrave's entire satisfaction. He especially admired the skillful manner in which a piece had been set in at the end of one of the steps which had but a small hole in it, and did not seem to require a whole board.

"That patch is worth fifty dollars," he declared, and increased his check by that amount.

The steps improved and money in hand, Mr. Remington was eager to begin at once to make other repairs, especially as the church people waked up as they had not for fifty years. With full confidence in the minister's ability to do anything well, they put the management of the repairs into his hands. Those mended steps challenged their admiration, and produced a more favorable

impression than a profound sermon could possibly have done.

Mr. Remington wrote home that he should not return for several days, giving so enthusiastic an account of his field of labor and Mrs. Blake's subscription, that Aunt Hannah was moved to add fifty dollars to the fund.

"Three hundred dollars will go a good ways if wisely spent," the minister told himself. To that end he enlisted all who were "cunning workmen" to help shingle or paint. One of the men was a painter by trade. He was to have full wages and direct those who volunteered to give labor as their contribution. A goodly force assembled one morning to begin work, among them the minister, armed with a paint-brush, his wardrobe increased by a jacket which matched the overalls.

"There's good grit in that fellow," Mr. Hargrave remarked to himself as he watched the painters, and noted that not a brush among the amateur workers was handled with such skill and vigor as the minister's.

Such fascinating work as it was to make over a church! When the outside of it was in order, the "boss," as the men took to calling him, set them to work on the lawn, cleaning out weeds, sodding it where needed and laying a good walk in front, while he went off to the city to buy paper for the walls. And behold, just as he was leaving, a note from Mr. Hargrave said:

"The old church is taking on airs. She must be all 'glorious within' as well as without. Whatever she needs to make her comfortable in the way of carpets, etc., please buy and send the bills to me."

Perhaps the stern man of business had tender memories connected with the church where his old father and mother had worshiped, or it may be he had an eye to the coming population which the new industries about to be established would surely bring, or it may have been a mere whim of an eccentric man to please the young minister to whom he had taken a fancy.

Purchases so important required Mrs. Remington's nice taste, so she met her husband in the city, and together they ransacked stores. They were exceedingly particular as to tints, tones and effects, and enjoyed the whole business like two children.

Behold the church of Stony Ridge, one September morning, transfigured! A very Quaker it was in pale gray, trimmed with a darker tint. Inside, too, the walls and woodwork were of gray, from dark stone, shading to a soft creamy tint, with a ceiling of pale green, meeting on the walls in a band of dark green. The carpet was only ingrain in shades of green, but it looked like bright moss. Green Venetian blinds shaded the windows, and the pulpit wore a new dress of dark green plush. A chandelier took the place of two or three smoky

lamps, and the stove-pipes had disappeared, the rusty stoves having given place to an excellent furnace which Mr. Remington got for half-price at a hardware firm where the proprietor was interested in struggling churches. He specially rejoiced in that purchase, the grim stoves and long stove-pipes had so emphasized the dreariness.

The morning the church was reopened for service it was nearly filled. Farmers' wagons, with generous loads of people, had driven early into town as they did on gala days. Evidently there was no trouble about gathering a congregation in Stony Ridge, provided there was sufficient attraction. It was a surprise to each one as they stepped in out of a glare of sunshine to the new, clean, cool place, with the soft air and fragrance of flowers. Mrs. Blake sat and took it all in, sang hallelujahs in her soul, and cast admiring glances at the young wife of the minister who had come over for the occasion. Then the first hymn aroused her, and she joined with rapture in the words —

> "How pleasant, how divinely fair,
> O Lord of hosts, thy dwellings are."

Mr. Remington chose it, remembering they sang it that first dreary Sabbath when it seemed to mock them. Many a tired-out man and woman took heart again and lifted up their heads in hope, as prayer and sermon fitted to their needs took hold upon them. It was blessed to hear the song,

strong and triumphant, go up again, and voices unused to praise joined in:

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our strength in years to come;
Our refuge from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

How safe and sweet and pure the sanctuary seemed that morning even to the careless! What a fair type it was of the eternal home! By this time Mr. Remington had forgotten all about disappointing letters and wide fields of labor, so absorbed had he become in making things over at Stony Ridge. He began to consider the question of settling down there, and went so far as to ask his wife if she could ever consent to it. They talked it over one day at Mapleton while they gathered chestnuts.

"The people are perfectly devoted to me," he said. "The country-side is thickly populated, and it is now a settled thing that a factory is to be established there, as well as a stone quarry."

"I don't wonder they are devoted to you," his wife said; "you come there and wave a magician's wand over a tumble-down old church in a weedy lot, and behold, all is changed. There it stands now in a dignified gray dress, with a lovely lawn in front, and that grand elm — what a mercy it is there, hiding the boxy shape — the neatest, prettiest country church within and without that can

be found. It really is a sweet place inside. Those grays and greens together have just the effect I wished. It would be interesting to work among factory people, and almost make a church as it were from the very beginning, but I fear we should grow as lean and cadaverous as Dr. Brown himself, trying to live on the salary he mentioned. I understand now what ails him ; he was starved in his youth."

"I could supplement it by writing some articles for religious papers. You know I have been invited to do so," Mr. Remington said, half-doubtfully ; "but it would seem that in these years of strength I might do more work than this place calls for at present. Still, how do we know what is important work? The thing, after all, is to do the will of the Master. If he closes other wide doors and opens this narrow one, he must mean that I shall go in and stay until he sends me elsewhere. He may see that I am not fitted for a different place. But my city-bred wife will be dreary in a country place like that?"

"Now, John, you know you want me to make a fine speech and say that no place can possibly be dreary while you are in it, but I shall not humor you, and I shall put my consent to live in Stony Ridge on a higher ground. When I knew that I had given myself to a minister, I promised that I would never be a hindrance in his work; that I would school myself to go cheerfully wherever he

thought he ought to go. John dear, don't you suppose the Master's will is, in the main, the greatest thing in life to me, too, even though I am so full of faults?"

The tone was wistful.

"You darling!" exclaimed John; "you are a brave woman. As to faults, your Father in Heaven and I both know that mine far outnumber yours."

It was not an easy thing for either husband or wife to do — to put on this garment of humility, to cast aside ambitions, the hope of filling a high place and bearing an honored name as the years went on. And it was trying to human nature to be thrust aside from a city pulpit, with its good salary and other attractive features, and, with rising popularity and no mean gifts as an orator, to take this obscure place, with a mere pittance to live on. But the decision was made in good faith and with no thought but that, if the people desired it, they should make Stony Ridge their home for years.

For the present they allowed Aunt Hannah to carry out her plans for them; that Martha and the baby should remain with her, and that John should divide his time between the two places. The only objection to the plan was the danger of spoiling the minister. Petted by all the good old women of Stony Ridge the last half of the week and welcomed with delight each Monday by two other fond souls, might destroy his humility.

Two months passed away and then Mr. Rem-

ington did not appear one Monday morning. Instead came a letter saying:

"I cannot come home this week. The most remarkable thing is happening here. I find myself in the midst of a wonderful revival. I had noticed as I went about visiting the people that they were unusually ready to speak upon the subject of religion. Yesterday the house was thronged. Many were in tears during the service, though the sermon was of the most unexciting character from the text, 'Lovest thou me?' In the evening we held a prayer meeting after the sermon, and almost every one remained. Many asked to be prayed for. They seemed broken in spirit and eager for instruction. It was easy work to direct them how to be saved, for the way was all prepared. This is not the result of my few sermons or visits; it is a wonderful visitation of the Spirit in answer to some saint's prayer of faith, possibly Mrs. Blake's or Aunt Hannah's, or both. And I thought my field narrow! God forgive me and fit me to labor in it. To think so great a joy should come to me!"

The work went on through the winter. Mr. Remington found little time to spend at Mapleton. The meetings, after the first three weeks, were not according to the usual plan of such work — a spasmodic effort lasting night and day for months, till soul and body were utterly worn out, to be followed by a reaction, mischievous and deplorable,

when Satan would smile to himself to see good people backslide into fretfulness, gloom or stupidity; when they would berate themselves as cold and without a particle of grace. And all because the poor nerves, strained to the utmost in the late hours and excesses of the past weeks, had snapped. It is a pity that God's people will sometimes forget that they have bodies as well as souls. The enemy loves to have it so.

The young minister must have had special wisdom bestowed upon him for the skillful management of this work. He made many calls, not in a perfunctory way, but with something of that gracious sympathy which Christ must have possessed, making people feel at once that he was a friend of theirs; and he preached no sermons but such as might be expected to produce immediate results. There was the usual Sabbath-morning service, and in the afternoon the young people were gathered for an hour. "Christian Ethics" the minister called it, and they liked the sound of it; but he talked to them of what he thought they needed most, or explained to them some of the doctrines, especially regeneration and faith. The weekly prayer meeting was followed by an inquiry meeting, as was also a young people's weekly meeting. Great care was taken to select and circulate attractive religious books through the parish. And here one had need of great discernment to fit the right book or tract to the right person. If

sure that James' "Anxious Inquirer" or Baxter's "Call" or Bunyan's "Come and Welcome" would not be read by certain persons, then there was a wide field to choose from to secure an excellent religious story, from "Pilgrim's Progress" down to Miss Warner's "Queechy" and "Old Helmet."

Where did the money come from? The minister devoted some of his tenth of the past year to it, and in his former parish was a woman who spent hundreds of dollars annually in sending good books and papers where they were needed. He considered it just as indispensable to have them as for a farmer to lay in a stock of good seed when the ground is prepared. He insured the reading of them by promises and by frequent allusions to their contents in sermon or prayer meeting, or by occasional questions in an informal meeting. A wise-looking old man or a bright young woman did not like to be silent and mystified when the minister suddenly turned to them and asked: "Do you recollect what happened to Christian just before he reached the Slough of Despond?" or, "Whom did Christian meet at the gate Beautiful?" And one did not enjoy being covered with confusion when asked what he thought of a certain character in "Daniel Quorm," or how he liked "Mr. Horne and His Friends." Sometimes the whole congregation was asked to read through, during the week, a certain book in

the Bible, as Romans or Hebrews, and try to find the special subject treated of. Or, a theme like the Prodigal Son was given out for prayer meeting, and each asked to state in a sentence or two what struck him most forcibly in the parable. The results were that the people aroused from the apathy which settles over the monotonous village and farm life in a country community, and were kept awake mentally and spiritually. In short, this wise minister's aim was to have a revival in his church that would go on through all the year.

It was spring at Mapleton. An unmistakable spring day! If the robin's song had not told you of it, the pussy-willow in her silver suit would have said it long before, or the apple-tree's gnarled old branches blossoming out in pink and white, or the lilac's white and lavender in old-fashioned sweetness, or the breezes, would have whispered it: that soft, delicious, indescribable, witching air with hints, in its odors, of new grass, of spicy woods, and mint and thyme, and what not, making one feel that he can run and jump and fly and do anything but settle down to steady practicalities.

Mrs. Remington was on the piazza giving little John a lesson in walking. The small rogue was in high glee. His white flannel dress was daintily held up by thumb and finger, and when with a desperate effort one chubby foot after the other was thrust out and brought down with a thump, he

shouted and showed all his ten white teeth in dimpling smiles.

The next minute the other member of this little family appeared, coming up the long walk from the gate, satchel in hand, and Baby John actually took three steps alone in his haste to be gathered up into the strong arms and held aloft.

"This sort of life has its compensations," Mr. Remington said, as he took both wife and baby into his arms at once. "It is so delicious to get home to you. I never in all my life looked forward to any pleasure as I do to this."

"John, don't you think, baby can talk!" his wife said, as soon as the greetings were over. "You know his shoes have silver buckles on. Aunt Hannah said over and over again to him one day when she was dressing him: 'See the buckle! Pretty buckle!' And behold, the next morning when he awoke he sat up and looked around and said: 'Buckle!' And when he sees anything new he gazes at it a while, then draws a long breath and says in a solemn way: 'Buckle!'"

"Who knows but he is talking about the great author of that name, and thinking wise, deep thoughts?" said Baby's father, adding: "What a noble, beautiful boy he is! It doesn't seem possible he belongs to us. Don't you worship him, dear, will you? else he can't stay with us."

"I don't seem to be the one in most danger of

committing that sin just at present," the young mother replied demurely.

But her husband did not retort. He was resting his eyes with the sight of mother and child, enjoying one of those rarely blissful moments in a man's life when it seems that the cup is full, and there is nothing more to ask.

"I have a letter from Elsie Chilton," said Mrs. Remington presently, and she read scraps of it between Baby's shouts and crows while he and his father played a game of "peek-a-boo."

"You dear people, I am hungry for a sight of you" [it began]. "I should have written long ago to let you know that I have not been 'good,' as the children say. You always think better of me than I am, so I feel as if I ought to confess. After my stepmother's death, I had many burdens laid upon me in the care of the younger children. I don't think I was patient. I fretted a good deal at my lot, and, though I tried, I was not always entirely cheerful and helpful in this gloomy house. Things are better with us now. Aunt Emily, father's sister, has come to live with us, and be at the head of the house. You do not know her. She was very fond of my own mother, but after my second mother came here she did not visit us because they were not quite congenial. She is the dearest auntie in the world, loving and wise and self-reliant. I feel so rested since she came, as if a great weight of responsibility had rolled off me. She calms and soothes us all with her saintly face and gentle ways. I think I shall be a better Christian now. But I think I can hear Mr. Remington saying that it is a very poor sort of religion which flourishes only in sunshine and when all goes smoothly. I am glad there are Christians of another sort. It is such a comfort to me that you and Mr. Remington will not stop praying for my father, even though he was foremost in having you leave us. I do not think he is quite so bitter toward temperance workers as he used to be.

He does not call me to account so often, though he knows I have sung in Fern Redpath's gospel temperance meetings two or three times. Perhaps it is because his thoughts are absorbed in another way. That dear girl is going on just the same. She is working now among the women in the penitentiary. I want you to know her better some time.

"Do you know I heard something the other day which gave me great joy? Some one told me that there is to be a new organization of our church at the West End, and they are talking of Mr. Remington to take charge of it. Won't that be lovely? You would be sure to come, would you not?"

"Would you?" asked Mrs. Remington, looking up into her husband's face.

CHAPTER III.

TO THE FRONT.

THE summer had but just begun when Mr. Remington received a letter from Mr. Hargrave, saying:

"At last we have perfected our new organization on the West Side, and are about to build. What next? We want *you*, and we mean to have you. The desire is unanimous. I say 'we' because I expect to rent our present home and build on the West Side, on account of the greater healthfulness of that part of the city. My relations, as you may know, have been with the Central Church.

"You can come to us without the preliminaries of trial sermons, etc. Many of the people on this side have often heard you preach, and, for my own part, I think I would consent to receive a man of as good pluck as yours, even if I had not heard you preach two excellent sermons at Stony Ridge."

[Then followed propositions as to the terms, and a house to live in until the parsonage should be completed, which seemed generous indeed.]

"We shall not be ready to receive you [he said] before September. Our chapel will be completed by that time.

"Do not, I beg of you, scruple to accept this on account of leaving Stony Ridge. You have done a good work for them, and another can carry them along. A man of your gifts should have a wider sweep. To tell the truth, I have forestalled any objections you might have to leaving the church alone at a critical

time, by conferring with my friend Dr. Ray, who has recommended to me a young man just from the seminary, who can better live on the small salary they can afford, and who is just the man for them unless you should know of somebody else."

Mr. Remington received the letter one evening just after he came over from Stony Ridge. They discussed the matter at the tea-table, and Aunt Hannah's usually cheerful countenance wore almost a cloud after the matter had been fully laid before her.

"It has come at last," she said. "I might have known this would not go on forever."

"No, it couldn't, in any case, dear auntie-mother," her nephew said, "for the people at Stony Ridge begin to feel that they have been defrauded, and I have made arrangements to take my treasures over there for a time, if you are all willing. Mrs. Wilbur has a large old house with plenty of room, and she will board us — she thinks we are going to visit her, but we are not. It is next door to Mrs. Blake's, and that old saint is in a blissful state of anticipation accordingly."

"Yes, I am selfish, I know," murmured Aunt Hannah; "I ought to be thankful, and I am, that that blessed baby has come through the worst of teething before he goes back to Babylon — if go he must."

"If we do, Aunt Hannah," said Martha, "you will have to go, too, and spend the winter with us.

I can never have the courage to discipline little John unless I am upheld by you."

It did not take long to settle the question. There were many weighty reasons why they should make the change, and no serious ones why they should not. Stony Ridge Church was now in a more prosperous condition than it had been for years; the addition of new members and the revivifying of old ones changed everything. They were able to add considerable to the salary, and hoped soon to be self-sustaining. Their hearts were sore, though, at the thought of parting with one who had been the means of so great good to them, but they were not unreasonable.

One of the recovered backsliders, an old man who had been a sea captain in his youth, put the thing before them in a few words, quite effectively.

"It is just like this, friends," he said; "our captain is ordered to another ship. He only came down here to tow us out to sea when he found us stuck on a sand-bar and badly broken up. He got us off and repaired our damages, and now here we are, all sails flying, making a prosperous voyage. Don't let's put on a down-in-the-mouth look and make him feel bad, but hearten up, and bid him go, with our blessing, to some other craft that's maybe in distress and needs him more than we do."

So it had come about that the Remingtons left the quiet, safe retreat of the past months and

plunged again into the heavier cares and burdens of a city pastorate.

It was a cheery house in which they found themselves established the latter part of September. That portion of the city had not been thought desirable by many as a place of residence, because it was a greater distance from the center than some of the other suburbs, and so had been largely built up by persons of moderate means. It looked like a pleasant village, with its shaded streets and bits of lawns before each cottage. Latterly the wealthier class had opened their eyes to its natural beauty, and a few more pretentious dwellings were beginning to appear on the surrounding hillsides.

"This is too delightful," Martha Remington said, standing at her chamber window a few mornings after their arrival; "to be in the city, and yet have many of the charms of the country. And what a view from this point! That hill all scarlet and gold, and that thread of a river winding at its foot. Do see the soft, blue-gray hill in the distance, just like that one I loved so much near our first parsonage. I shall like it here so very much. I am glad and thankful for this beautiful home. Let us stay here years and years, John, if we can. We have not made a good record thus far for stayativeness. We have only been in the ministry five years, and this is our fourth church, counting Stony Ridge."

Mr. Remington was buttoning on a very stiff collar. Apparently it is never an act that promotes an amiable state of mind. Whether it was the refractory collar or the remembrance of the fact just stated which brought a frown to his face, nobody will ever know. He was about to say, in dignified tones, that he was extremely sorry to have caused her mortification on that account, but that he should never put a muzzle on his mouth to please anybody ; that she might as well understand first as last that ministers could not expect permanence, etc. But he was saved from that cross speech. He happened to cast a glance at Martha standing there in her pink-and-white morning gown, with brown hair rippling away from her face, her eyes, luminous with delight, fixed upon the distant hills. She looked sweet and fair ; she had not a thought that her remark had annoyed him. His heart relented. He was but a few years the elder of his wife, but he felt old in experience just then, as he looked at her bright face. It swept over him for an instant — the realization that the ministerial life was in a peculiar manner filled with uncertainties, and that the coming years might bring keener trials than they had yet dreamed of. If he could but shield her from them all ! But he tried to answer in her own light vein as he said :

" Don't allow Satan to send me any word by you, dear, and suggest that I feather this pleasant

nest we have come to with soft speeches and half-truths when courage to speak unpleasant whole truths may be required of me."

But despite his intention, the tones were full of feeling, almost solemn. Martha turned quickly. Had she touched him in a sensitive spot?

"John dear," she said, putting both hands into his, "that was a thoughtless speech; forgive me. Nobody will be prouder of you for speaking whole truths than I shall, let the consequences be what they may; and I don't want you to be one of those old fossils who stay forty years in one church, and perhaps have all the people wishing you would die, because that is the only conceivable way to get rid of you."

Then, growing more serious, she added:

"O, John! don't misunderstand me ever, though I do make childish remarks sometimes, and do not you think that, for the sake of ease and a pleasant home, I would wish you to stultify your conscience. I know that you must speak the message given you by the Master, and together we are to take, with a meek and quiet spirit, whatever that brings to us."

Then John Remington thanked God again for the gift of his wife, and they went hand in hand to little John's crib to look upon the prettiest sight in the world — a rosy, curly-haired baby in a setting of lace and creamy blankets, waking in the morning. What wonder in his eyes at another

new day! And there is a grave, puzzled expression, as if he were trying to account for his return from Dreamland, and then the little face dissolves into a rare, sweet smile as he meets his mother's eyes. Ah! he has found his bearings. He is not adrift any longer on the sea of nowhere. Instantly every sense is awake and alert. He is a bundle of springs and happiness, and ready for anything, from being rolled over and over like the round, soft ball he is, to a toss in the air, which is better than anything.

It was easy to settle the household this time, because when they removed from the city they had accepted the offer of a good friend to store their furniture in her capacious attic.

"I am so glad Aunt Hannah would not hear to our selling it," Mrs. Remington remarked to her husband; "we would not have realized half its value, and here it is just as good as new. Aunt Hannah always does know best about everything. It is such a relief for us to have, like the Peterkins, 'a lady from Philadelphia' to whom we can apply in all emergencies, sure that she knows precisely what should be done."

"There is a grand temperance rally in the opera house to-night," Mr. Remington said, as he came in from down town. "We must go, even if we have just arrived, for Miss Fern Redpath is to speak among others, and you know we wished to

hear her when we were here before, but lost the opportunity."

"I don't see how I can go to-night, but I will," his wife answered; "I wonder if Elsie will be there to sing; probably not. You know she wrote me she should not be at home till the last of September, and this is the twenty-third, is it not?"

That meeting in the opera house was a sight to gladden the hearts of the brave minority who wage the battles of the Lord against the arch-enemy, Rum. The immense building was filled to overflowing. The opening prayer was by a white-haired old minister whose only son was a victim to the drink habit, who had hidden himself away from friends for years. If the object in selecting this man to pray had been merely politic, it could not have been planned more wisely, for the audience could but follow the strong pleadings of this broken-hearted father. The very atmosphere seemed filled with prayer from the bowed multitude.

The first speaker of the evening the Remingtons saw with delight was their old friend, Earle Mason. They had supposed him to be still in Berlin, whither he had gone to take a course of Roman law. Though connected with one of the strongest law firms in the city, with a vast amount of labor expected of him, he was, withal, heart and soul in the work of reform, and while in the city was in such demand as a platform speaker, that if he had accepted all invitations he received through-

out the country to speak upon this subject and others, he might have employed all his time in that way.

He was well chosen as the first speaker. His ready wit, his clear logic, his keen satire, his persuasive eloquence, combined with a magnetic influence, carried all before him. Enthusiasm rose to a high pitch. The audience was ready for anything. Continuous applause testified to their delight. If a proposition had been made to then and there march out in battle array and demolish all the saloons in the city, they would doubtless have responded.

After a song by the glee club, Dr. Fletcher, a stranger, was next introduced — a tall man of fine presence and striking face, with luminous eyes, which looked as if they were used to searching into deep things. He plunged at once into the heart of the subject, and gave a short address wherein was packed much scientific knowledge, as well as weighty arguments, conclusively proving to some that alcohol was always and ever an injury to the human system under any circumstances whatever.

The next moment, unannounced, there stood upon the platform a lovely girl with a halo of golden hair about her face, in a gown of soft white, plain as a nun's, and sang, as only Elsie Chilton could sing. Many a strong man brushed away a tear as the simple ballad, "Baby Nellie's Prayer," found

its way to his heart, burning in a lesson where logic had failed to make an impression.

At the close of the song Miss Redpath was announced. Strangers who had come there thinking to see a typical strong-minded woman, with short hair and nasal twang, and to hear her rant and rave, must have been disarmed by the appearance of the fair, earnest-eyed young woman, who, invested with a sort of sweet dignity, began to speak simply, and with no more self-consciousness than if she were in her own parlor. Her modest demeanor and pleading words impressed all with the feeling that herself had been forgotten, merged into the self-denying labors of her high calling. She was one of the few women who ever should feel it their duty to speak to large audiences. Because of a peculiar quality in her voice, like a silver bell, she could be heard distinctly in every part of the house without appearing to speak above her natural tones, or make that overstrained effort which results in screaming. Her plea was for the women in the penitentiary. Every one with whom she had conversed had been brought there by strong drink. She described their desolate homes, and little children worse than orphaned. One woman she knew of would be discharged in a few days. She had promised to reform, to try to recover her lost womanhood. She was eager to get home to her children; she had vowed: "I will make a pleasant home; I will be a good mother."

"But what hope is there for her? On the way to her home the tempter will meet her. A vile saloon will beckon her in with its cheerful light and warmth. She will fall into the trap. She will drink again, and go out with a fire in her veins that crazes her brain. She will go back to the penitentiary. In the name of pity is there no help for such as she?"

In the end of the gallery nearest the platform was a group of men whose hardened faces wore sneers. Evidently they were not there in the interests of temperance or law and order. Several times during the evening they had manifested disapproval by shuffling of feet and shakes of the head. Mrs. Remington watched them with a feeling of dread, but was reassured when she saw a couple of stalwart policemen. While Miss Redpath was speaking their faces grew darker. They muttered to each other, and fairly glared upon her as she alluded to saloons.

Some of Mr. Remington's friends, having heard of his arrival, made urgent calls for him to come to the platform. He came promptly, and was received with much demonstration. The brilliant young preacher was remembered as a ready speaker, who would bring credit to any cause he defended.

John Remington never did things quite like any one else. He began now to recite some words of Scripture as if they were his own, with rhetorical art and impassioned tone:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. . . And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

The effect was wonderful. A peculiar stillness and solemnity fell upon the audience as he in a few words applied the Scripture to the present day, boldly declaring that in his opinion Satan was actually at the head of the whole iniquitous rum traffic, and that those engaged in it were as really his minions as any that ever came out of the pit, whether they knew it or not, even though they supposed themselves to be only engaged in getting an "honorable living."

"It is plainly taught in this Scripture and others," he went on, "that Satan is the enemy of souls. Paul says: 'We are not ignorant of his devices.' Neither are we. Who but he could have got up so gigantic a scheme for ruining souls? What diabolical cunning is displayed! He manufactures a drink to suit all classes and ages. Not many would fall into the trap if Bourbon or brandy were presented first. It would be horrible to the taste. Ah! he knows better. He makes sweet cider first, then some that is not quite sweet — more delicious still — then a mild, pleasant wine and a foaming, sparkling, exhilarating beverage called beer, then a little stronger wine of exquisite flavor, some stronger beer, some mild brandy, and the thing is done. That appetite is planted which is stronger than love and cruel as the grave, which nothing will uproot but one of God's miracles.

"And who but Satan could persuade a mother that her delicate baby, when ailing, needs a brandy bath and a few drops of the same vile stuff administered internally? Who but he could so blind the eyes of a young man that he will take a glass of liquid fire every day for a year, and not know that he will be bound hand and foot by the habit? Therein lies his most fearful power, the ability to blindfold even the elect. How else can you account for the sorrowful fact that some of God's ministers not only tamper with the deadly poison

themselves, but recommend it to others when they can get a pure article! Pure! Think of it! To this, too — Satan's power to deceive — may be traced in part the apathy and short-sightedness and cupidity of our law-makers. But let us, beloved, 'put on the whole armor, that we may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil.' And let us pray always that we may have courage to denounce the whole traffic as sin, *sin*, SIN, now and forevermore! And, brothers and sisters, take this high word of encouragement from the Lord himself. Listen! 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet — *shortly*.' Shall we doubt or despond after that? Never!"

As Mr. Remington took his seat his wife's attention was again attracted to the knot of men in the gallery. A growl, like distant thunder, came from that corner. One of the policemen changed his seat, moving nearer to them, and the glee club broke into song. In the hall the same men came downstairs just as they were passing out. Mrs. Remington saw them casting evil eyes toward her husband, and pointing him out as he stood talking with some one. They looked fierce, and one man shook his fist and muttered threatenings. The young wife shuddered and stepped to the side of her husband. Her heart sank as she realized for the first time that other harm than the loss of popularity among conservative people might befall him.

The next morning, soon after breakfast, there

was much cooing and fluttering in Mrs. Remington's nursery. Elsie Chilton, dressed in brown, her gold hair in a knot below a jaunty little brown cap, escaping here and there in waves and rings about her forehead, was kneeling on the floor beside Baby John as he sat on a large cushion surrounded by playthings. So well did the acquaintance progress that he was soon in a bubble of laughter and frolic.

"I believe the darling remembers me," she said to Mrs. Remington; "he is not a bit afraid."

"Nobody could be afraid of you," Mrs. Remington said, regarding her fondly; "but you are giving this baby an extraordinary memory; remember he was but two months old when you parted from him."

"And now he is twenty months, isn't he? The sweetest age! Does he talk? Oh, what lovely little teeth! and look, he has taken off his shoe and stocking! Such a dear little pink foot!" and Elsie fell to devouring it with kisses.

Little John gazed at her in baby wonder and made clutches at her hair, shouting with delight when he succeeded in getting such a firm hold of the soft curls that his mother was obliged to come to the rescue and unclasp the naughty fingers.

"Now get up and be rational," she said to Elsie. "Take this easy-chair and tell me all about yourself and everybody."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW ONE WORKER WAS MADE.

"TELL me more about your lovely friend, Miss Redpath," Mrs. Remington said, after a half-hour of confidences. "You know I only met her a few times before we went away. It seems almost singular that one so young and attractive, and of high social position, should take up such work. It is quite unusual, unless, indeed, one is a remarkable Christian."

"She is that," Elsie said; "but I do not think she would probably have done just as she has if she had not had a peculiar experience. Her young brothers were away at school, and were nearly ruined by means of drink. She became thoroughly aroused upon the subject, and, after they were saved, resolved to devote her life to the work of saving others. There was another reason, too, for it, and a sadder one, if possible, which she does not speak of. She did not tell me of it until we had become quite intimate. She was engaged to a young physician, but trouble came between them on account of this question. I do not think

she will ever marry now. She is devoted to her work, and is perfectly indifferent even to the most attractive young men. She was not herself last night. She seemed like one who had girded herself up to be calm under some sort of pressure. Her calmness was so intense that she was almost severe. Did you notice how pale and set her face was?"

"No, I did not," Mrs. Remington said; "I suppose I would not observe it as you, who knew her well. She looked very beautiful to me, with her pure face and dark hair, worn in that loose knot. Her black gown, too, was elegant in its simplicity. She is charming as a speaker. She does not rant nor gesticulate. Those lovely white hands, often clasped pleadingly, are more effective than mannish gestures. Her manner is charming, because of her utter lack of self-consciousness."

"Well, I cannot account for her agitation after the meeting last night," said Elsie. "Judge Morton asked her to wait a moment so that he could present to her a friend of his, but she begged to be excused, and hurried off to her carriage without even stopping to speak to me. I hope she heard no bad news. But I must go. Father comes home to lunch now, and I do not like to be late," glancing at the clock. "I am coming here six times a week. May I?" and her bright face was gone.

It was a few years before the date of this story

that Paul Fletcher and Fern Redpath met at a watering-place. She a girl just graduated from school, and he a promising young physician from a neighboring city.

Dr. Fletcher had been trained according to good, old-fashioned methods, and when he left home for college was a professed Christian. But while he aimed to be pure-hearted and noble, and yielded an intellectual assent to the doctrines of religion, it had never come as a power into his life, causing him to be rooted and grounded in the faith and filled with divine enthusiasm. Until one has loved Christ with his whole soul, he is a fit subject for the tempter. If Christian fathers and mothers would but importunately pray for that benediction of love to come upon their children before they send them into the world, should we have so many doubters and men of no moral stamina?

And so it turned out that college life had the effect upon Paul Fletcher that it often has upon fair beginnings which have not yet crystallized into strong character. True, his integrity was unimpeached in the eyes of the world, and his intellectual attainments were brilliant; but he was full of ologies and osophies. He was sure of nothing. He detested radicalism, and adored people who had no sharply defined lines for anything. Liberty of thought and action was one of the chief articles in his creed. Conscientious scruples concerning the easy ways of the world

were, in his opinion, the outgrowth of ignorance and lack of culture. One who could not occasionally take a glass of wine in company, or play a game of euchre, or dance to fill out a set, was an unmitigated bigot.

Strange to say, when Dr. Fletcher came to Mountain Springs that summer, the girl whom he eagerly sought out as a companion in ramble or horseback ride, was one who had received careful training, such as results in what the young man termed narrowness and bigotry. And Fern Redpath was loyal to her training. She did not dance nor play euchre nor drink wine. She was an enthusiastic Christian, with a faith simple as a child's, but of that quality which would be true as steel in time of trial. And yet she was charming in all winsome ways and glad-heartedness. One of those rare spirits who live for another world, and have, albeit, a keen relish for the joys of this one.

The days went fast to those young people that summer. They rambled through the woods and climbed mountains; they went fishing and rode horseback, botanized and geologized and read poetry, and ended by finding, somewhat to the astonishment of each, that their two hearts were welded together.

Fern was pleased to find that Dr. Fletcher was a member of a church in the same denomination as her own. He did not obtrude any of his mystical beliefs or unbeliefs upon her. In fact, he did

not speak much of religious things at all. In her innocence she inferred that it was his peculiarity — some men were reserved on that subject — and took it for granted that one so noble as he held the same views as herself on all important moral issues, as she had seen nothing in his practice to the contrary.

Truth to tell, Dr. Fletcher had an intuitive feeling that amusements such as many others indulged in, would not be congenial to this girl, whose exquisite refinement and delicacy of character seemed to raise her above common mortals. Perhaps there was another reason why he did not ask her to join the gay company. It suited him best to sit in a quiet nook and read to Fern Redpath, watch the changing lights in her face, and then drift off into pleasant talk. It was surprising how much there was to be said, and what a oneness of opinion there was on authors and books and art. When they parted, after a few brief weeks, they were pledged to each other for life, with the full consent of Fern's mother, who had known Dr. Fletcher's family for years, and was happy in the prospect of receiving as a son one of whom they could hear nothing but the highest praise.

A few months of separation, cheered by almost daily correspondence, and then Dr. Fletcher came for a brief visit, and the engagement was announced.

It was during the visit, and the night before he

was to leave, that a cloud came into Fern Redpath's sky. It was at a brilliant wedding reception given by one of the leading families of the city. Gay groups were gathered about small tables in the dining-room, Fern sitting opposite Dr. Fletcher, each trying to interest themselves in another person, but at the same time carrying on a conversation with each other by means of swift glances.

One instant the girl's face was like sunshine; the next it had in it amazement, grief and horror. She had seen Paul Fletcher take a tiny glass of wine and put it to his lips. Yes, he did more than that. He drank it off as if he enjoyed it. She forgot the presence of others and turned a surprised, pained look upon him. Their eyes met as he replaced the glass. Was there a slightly haughty curve about his mouth then, or did she only imagine it? She answered the next several remarks of the young man at her side in a dazed manner, and was relieved to find people moving away from the table. How was it possible, she asked herself in those few minutes, that she had never talked with Paul about this question? There had been no deliberate intention on Dr. Fletcher's part to conceal his sentiments regarding total abstinence. The subject had never happened to come up in their talks, and both Fern and her mother had simply taken it for granted that he took high ground on every question of right and wrong. If

he had occasionally heard an earnest word from Fern on that point, he set it down to a fit of girlish enthusiasm which would soon evaporate. It was a sorrowful face that was turned toward Dr. Fletcher, when at last on their return home they found themselves alone, as Fern said:

"I did not know that you ever drank wine, Paul."

"O, yes! on occasion," he answered lightly, and then asked, "Why should you think so? I never denied it."

"Because I thought you believed it to be wrong, as I do," she said, lifting up her head and gathering courage.

"It may be wrong for some people ever to taste it, but I do not belong to that class; I can drink it or let it alone."

"Oh! then why not let it alone for the sake of others?"

"Because I am not responsible for others in that sense," Dr. Fletcher answered, in a slightly annoyed tone; "they must exercise self-control, as I do."

"Surely you believe that a Christian ought to help those who are weak and tempted," Fern said, with widening eyes.

"Certainly. I consider that I do help them — to maintain sobriety — when I set the example of governing myself in this as in all other things. The meaning of temperance is moderation — not

going to excess. It is only fanatics who give to it the name of total abstinence."

"We ought to be very plain with each other now," Fern said sadly. "May I ask if you do not as a rule practice total abstinence?"

The young man flushed under the gaze of the clear eyes which looked into his, but he answered promptly:

"I do not. I cannot be said to drink liquor as a beverage except occasionally, and sometimes socially, but if I feel that a small amount of wine or ale or Bourbon would be good for me when I have been under unusual fatigue or exposure in the way of my profession, I take it with a clear conscience. But, Fern," he added, looking at his watch, "it is quite late. Are you going to let a thimbleful of wine come between us this last evening? You know we have more important matters to talk over."

Fern grew sick at heart as it flashed over her that it might come between them for a life-time.

"I cannot talk about anything else," she said, "until I feel at rest about this. O, Paul! can you not promise me never to taste it again?"

"I cannot," he replied, flushing angrily. "Believe me, I am not on the high road to destruction that I must sign the pledge like a common drunkard. It seems you cannot trust me. How can you respect me if you think I have no self-control?"

"But it has been so often proved that the strongest are weak before the power of that fearful appetite when once it is formed. There is no absolute safety but in entire abstinence."

"That is mere nonsense, the belief of a few cranks!"

"Paul," the girl said, with whitening face, "it was my father's belief and it is mine. He would never have given his consent to my marriage with one who holds such views, and I — oh! I cannot give my own consent. When you think of all that is at stake, can you not give it up forever? Oh! say you will."

The young man must have been possessed of a demon for the moment, to be able to resist the pleading tones and eager face of the girl he loved.

"I cannot consent," he declared, "to be thus humiliated. It is beyond anything I ever heard of. You would break your engagement because I will not make an absurd promise, the keeping of which will often bring me into embarrassment and ridicule! I might endure that, but the lack of confidence which requires the promise is insulting to my manhood. I must be my own judge of what is right and wrong. I cannot suffer dictation even at your hands."

He walked hurriedly up and down the room during the moment of silence which followed, then he came and stood beside her and said:

"Fern, do you not see where this extreme posi-

tion is leading you? Of course, you do not mean that for so slight a reason you would break a tie which you have held sacred, and so bring untold sorrow to both of us. It will be a hard thing for you to face. Can you not cast this folly aside and be your own self the few minutes that are left?"

The girl sat like a beautiful statue, not in a passion of tears, but the anguish in her eyes and the sorrowful curves of her mouth betokened anything but indifference. When she spoke, the voice was that of one who had been stricken.

"Oh! it is not a small thing. It is not folly. There is the hopelessness of it that you do not understand how impossible it is for me to be false to the teachings of all these years, even — even though it cost me my life."

"I must go," said Dr. Fletcher, with watch in hand. "I am to consider, then, that you cast me off; that there is to be no more between us unless I recant, or you. Good-by."

His anger had reached a climax. He would have gone without even a hand-clasp, but Fern followed him into the hall, and, detaining him for an instant, reached up, and, like a sorrowing angel, left a soft kiss on his forehead, which went with him through the years, and kept him often from doing the things he might otherwise have done.

Dr. Fletcher believed that he should not have been absent many days before he should receive a

letter from Fern, confessing that she had exaggerated a trifle, and begging him to forgive her foolishness. But when weeks passed and no word from her came to him, he was amazed. Indignation and despair ruled him by turns. At last he wrote a reproachful letter, making one last appeal, declaring again his great love, and entreating her to trust him as she had of old.

The reply was on many closely written pages. Only the heart of a woman, when her dearest hopes were at stake, could have so pleaded with convincing argument and loving entreaty. But the same sad, firm statement was there. "It can never be unless you abjure forever that one dangerous indulgence."

There was a reason for not granting her request which Dr. Fletcher would not, for the world, have given to this white-souled girl. In fact, he had but just discovered it himself in its strength and power. The habit of wine-drinking was beginning to take firm hold of him. Conceal the truth as he might under the pretense of wounded dignity, it was the underlying cause of his unwillingness to make the promise. And he saw no danger in taking the small amount of stimulants he allowed himself. He even persuaded himself that he required a gentle tonic to tone him up after a hard day's work.

His was not a shallow nature, which could lightly cast aside the one love of his life and with

piqued pride fasten his affections upon another. So he suffered in silence and gloom, hoping that time would cause Fern Redpath to repent of her folly and recall him. As the months went by and he received no word, he decided to change his plans and go to Europe for two or three years' study and hospital practice.

CHAPTER V.

A PROMISE FULFILLED.

AS for Fern Redpath, life had come to a standstill. She sat amidst the ruin of her hopes dazed by the sudden shock, surprised that so great a sorrow should have come to her. That she could, by reversing her decision, change it all she never thought possible for a moment. It was utterly out of the question. And yet she could not believe that Paul Fletcher would allow the giving of a promise on such a question to come between them forever; so she waited and prayed day by day, till weeks and months had passed, for a glad word from him, a word which should banish Sorrow's grim face. But it came not.

At last she was aroused from a state of apathy in an unlooked-for way. Her young brothers were in danger from that same enemy which had poisoned her own peace. They had been placed in a school in a distant city, which was supposed to be peculiarly excellent, preparatory to college. They were bright young fellows, but had missed the guiding influence of a father's firm hand in

their training. As the mother was disposed to indulge them, it had fallen upon their sister Fern to try to instill into them the principles in which she had been carefully trained by her father. She had seemed to be successful until they left home, then they happened to fall under the influence of the fast set which is found in every school: boys with plenty of money, no moral training and precocious in evil ways. Fern's brothers, though they loved their sister dearly, soon began to think that many of her opinions were now quite out of date and impracticable, especially as they attended a church whose pastor was known to hold peculiar views (for a clergyman) on the subject of temperance, as he advocated the drinking of mild wines and pure beer. The young men of his congregation, as a rule, were glad to follow such a leader, though many of them by no means practiced the moderation he advised. They wished for no slow trains on the road to destruction. And so these brothers, mere boys as they were, soon broke over all restraints; they squandered their money in wine suppers, staid out nights, and broke rules generally. Just as they were about to be expelled for their misconduct, a friend of their mother's, a whole-souled woman and grand worker in the temperance cause, heard of it and came to their rescue. The boys were frightened; and promised reformation. She interceded for them, saying she would be responsible for their good conduct; then, with

their mother's consent, took them into her own family and watched over them far more wisely than their mother could have done. The result, after a couple of years, was two thoroughly reconstructed boys added to the noble army of young men who are, under God, to save this country in a higher, wider sense than it has even yet been saved.

It was just when Fern was suffering most keenly from her own trials that this distress and anxiety came down upon the household. Her mother was nervous and delicate, and must not be too much burdened, so she had to rouse herself and try to be brave and cheerful. It was during these days when she prayed for her brothers with almost every breath, that a strong desire took possession of her to join the great army of Christian workers in battling against the foe who stalks about desolating homes and hearts. The whole question so loomed up before her, the misery and sin caused by this legalized evil, that she vowed before God to lift her voice against the awful curse at every opportunity.

When the Master calls a soul to high service he sometimes gives it first to drink of the cup of suffering of which he drank.

Dr. Fletcher had been abroad more than three years. They had not been happy ones. If he had not plunged into the study of sciences connected with his profession, they would have been intoler-

able. He had gained rich stores intellectually, but was growing into a cynical misanthrope. In his dissatisfaction with life he often declared that it was not worth living.

It was one stormy evening when he was confined to his room by a slight indisposition that he felt positively stranded. His head ached too badly to pursue a scientific train of thought and he could not read for the same reason. There was nobody and nothing to amuse him, and he could not even sleep to kill time. To make the matter worse, it was the night before Christmas, that loneliest of all lonely seasons for a stranger in a strange land.

As he sat with half-closed eyes, leaning back in his chair, the sound of low, sweet singing came to him. An American lady and gentleman with their infant child occupied the rooms near his. The transoms were opened and the song floated in. Evidently the young mother had remembered what evening it was, for the lullabys she sang were on one theme only. Dr. Fletcher bent his head in eager attention as the old familiar words came distinctly to his ears:

"When marshaled on the nightly plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky,
One star alone of all the train
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.

"Hark! hark! to God the chorus breaks,
From every star, from every gem;
But one alone the Saviour speaks —
It is the star of Bethlehem."

From that she glided into another just as old and sweet:

> "While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
> All seated on the ground,
> The angel of the Lord came down,
> And glory shone around."

"Just so my mother sang her Christmas hymns to me long ago; those very hymns," he thought.

The heartsick man closed his eyes and went back over the years, recalling many of the words and tones and ways of the mother who was gone. How concerned she had been that he should live on a high plane. Would she be satisfied if she saw his daily life?

The room was only lighted as yet by the beams of the full moon which smiled in at the wide window, resting lovingly on a portrait, the mild, sweet face of the young man's mother.

Dr. Fletcher never allowed himself time for tender memories of any sort these days. He resolutely shut them out by keeping every moment employed. But he got up now and walked over to the picture, gazing into the soft eyes which seemed to look reproachfully at him in that strange silvery light.

Then the pent-up yearning and loneliness of all the years found voice in "O, mother, mother!"

He stood long with head bowed on his hands, going over his life, calling up words and deeds

which must have cut that gentle mother's heart like a knife.

"Fool! Why did I not live so that I should have no remorse?" he asked himself as he began to walk up and down the room. He thought what an empty, desolate life his had been at the best. He had not meant it to be so in his early youth. What a selfish, miserable character his was contrasted with his mother's! He had even made another life as desolate as his own perhaps, and then followed the tormenting doubt as to whether Fern Redpath had ever truly cared for him. If she had, how could she let the years go on and make no sign? How could he? But he was a man. Women were supposed to have tenderer affections. Besides, she was the offender; she had not faith in his integrity and strength of purpose. He wished she could know, to show her the fallacy of her arguments, that he had not yet become the sot she feared he would. But why should he think of her this Christmas night? It was Christmas time, that happy week he spent in her own home, and that wretched night when he saw her last. The moon shone just as it did now. Hateful moon! She had probably forgotten him by this time, except to breathe a sigh of pity at mention of his name as she might for any wretch. He allowed his fancy to dwell for a moment upon Fern in a new home of her own, happy in the love of another. The thought maddened him. He

drew down the shades, shutting out the obnoxious moon, and lighted the gas. But he got no relief from his restlessness. The Lord had come to meet Paul Fletcher that night. It was of no use to shut out the moonlight and turn away from his mother's eyes to try to still the voice of conscience.

A strange thing had happened to him during the last few days. His studies of the human system, and the result of certain new scientific experiments, had convinced him, entirely against his will, that alcohol was injurious to the delicate tissues of the vital organs, even though taken only in small quantities. Being thus convinced, he resolved to make no further use of it in his practice. But it was not so easy to abjure it personally. He was exceedingly fond of the amount of stimulus he now allowed himself daily. He had sometimes been tempted to increase it when he had been through extra fatigues in his hospital practice, but pride saved him from repeating it often. He wished to demonstrate that a man may be temperate in the use of wine and brandy, as well as other things which might result in injury if used to excess. And yet, blind himself as he would to the fact, he was aware that his nerves were often unsteady on account of the stimulus he had taken. It humiliated and angered him to discover that he had not strength enough to abandon what he was now convinced worked injury only. Where was his boasted self-control?

For almost the first time in his life Paul Fletcher was not sufficient to himself, and his heart cried out for help. He had never cut loose from his connection with the Church. He could not abjure his mother's faith, even though it was a dead letter as far as answering any needs of his own heart was concerned, it having never influenced his life in the slightest. He found himself wondering now whether it would be possible for him to be a Christian like his mother, resting on something which gave him solemn peace and comfort independent of outward circumstances, squaring his life by rules made by One unseen and mysterious. But she loved it all. He did not. It was burdensome. Its requirements were tedious. What a mere farce his church connection was at best! What was the matter? He was honest when he made it.

His newspapers lay on the table, just arrived from the mail. He picked up one idly and looked it over. It was his mother's church paper. He never read it and did not value it. But for his mother's sake he allowed it to continue coming. His eye fell on a paragraph of a dozen lines, an extract from the writings of one who is a master in spiritual thought of the present generation.

"The well-defined spiritual life is not only the highest life, but it is also the most easily lived. The whole cross is more easily carried than the half. It is the man who tries to make the most of both worlds who makes nothing of either. He who seeks to

serve two masters misses the benediction of both. But he who has taken his stand, who has drawn a boundary line sharp and deep about his religious life, who has marked off all beyond as forever forbidden ground to him, finds the yoke easy and the burden light."

He read them a second time, then cast the paper aside and took up his march about the room again. The words, for some reason, strangely arrested his attention, partly because he reverenced the intellect of the author. "He who tries to make the most of both worlds makes nothing of either." "Exactly what I have done," he said to himself. "I am a failure, morally, as far as both worlds are concerned, and I have sadly missed the benediction of both. What if I were to take my stand and draw a 'boundary line sharp and deep' about my religious life — if I have anything that can be called a religious life. Suppose I declare that I will be different from this night! That will not make me so. How shall it be done? It is a terrible undertaking. I only know I am helpless."

To know that one is helpless is far on the way to being helped. Before he closed his eyes in sleep Dr. Fletcher made a full surrender of himself to Christ. The old cry, "Lord, save, or I perish" — when was it ever made in vain?

He was not conscious that night of exercising true faith. He only knew that his whole soul went out in prayer, and that it was not the same old formula that he had for years been saying over

lifelessly as one might use a charm or incantation. And he was not sensible of any great change in himself, or uplifting. He was even depressed with the conviction that there was a mighty work to be done in him that, little by little, would probably be accomplished through the years; his part was to struggle, and maintain an unwavering purpose. The next morning, though, he was surprised to find that his heart was tender toward God, that the Bible was precious and prayer sweet. He spent that day alone, shut in from work and study, that he might look this wonderful thing that had come to him in the face and reconstruct his character on a new basis. His past life seemed vile and hateful, his aims frivolous, his conduct inexcusable. It was strange how clear-cut and positive his opinions became regarding consistent Christian living. Many of his fine theories would not stand with this white light flashed upon them. Certain practices and indulgences which he had allowed himself as an easy-going Christian, seemed now utterly out of character for one who was to live with eternity in view. There was no doubt or dallying, either, about the question of stimulants. How could he ever have been so blind as to think otherwise? He dashed the thing from him as he would have done had it been there literally. Especially did he feel bowed down in humiliation when he reflected what it had cost him.

Is all this incredible in so short a space? As

if the One who said, "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you," was limited by time!

And now from day to day this awakened soul wondered over the power of God to so change one as to make him in thought and action the exact reverse, in many respects, of his former self.

We have all been through it, prayed our poor little prayers with but a spark of faith, and gone our ways, despondent, half-despairing, over the evil in our own hearts, when lo! presently, the stone has been rolled away, the mountain of rebellion gone, the revengeful spirit sweetened, and not by our struggles or resolves! How we forget that He has promised: "A right spirit will I put within you!"

It was not a little singular that Dr. Fletcher should at once number himself among those people he had called "cranks," and begin, in the most zealous and outspoken manner, to strike blows against liquor dealing and drinking. He was specially interested in trying to convince young men of the folly of moderate drinking and he did not lack for material to work upon in a country where the fallacy has obtained that cold water is by far the most dangerous drink one can take.

Having undergone so radical a change, his heart began to thrill with another thought, and wonder whether Fern Redpath were lost to him forever; whether he had any right to dwell upon memories

of her; for, despite momentary efforts to pronounce her bigoted and severe, he was wont to think of her, in his heart of hearts, as an exquisite pearl, a rare white rose, queen of all the women he had ever met.

Should he seek her now and know his fate at once? No; he would wait a year, at least, until his new principles had withstood the fire of temptation. He would wait and work, and not speak a word to her. He must be sure of himself. It was a severe ordeal, for he had no means of discovering if there might be hope for him at the end of the year of probation.

CHAPTER VI.

"IT HAS HAPPENED."

THE bitterest drop in this cup of self-abasement for Dr. Fletcher was that he found it extremely difficult to forego the stimulus to which he had accustomed himself. The diseased nerves and tissues rebelled and clamored. It required constant watchfulness and prayer in seasons of temptation, and there were hours of darkness and conflict. He could not realize at once that relying on struggles and resolves and vows was like ropes of cobwebs in a hand-to-hand fight of this sort. It took wearisome days and nights for him to learn that it is Jesus Christ who saves from sin; that he had but to cast himself upon him, bankrupt and helpless, and look to him unceasingly.

When at last he was enabled to do it, the weakened will grew strong again. He felt himself to be free from shackles which he was now conscious had weighed him down. His brain was clear, the unclogged machinery sent pure blood leaping through his veins once more, and there

was joy in mere existence, such as he remembered in early youth.

The probation period he had set himself being ended, Dr. Fletcher resolved to know at once what the future had in store for him, whether the fulfillment of his dearest hopes or lifelong disappointment.

He held an important position in a European hospital, and the time of his contract had not yet expired. But longer delay was out of the question; so, obtaining a month's vacation, he found himself in a few days, after five years' absence, in his old home.

It was necessary to stop there for a day to attend to a matter of business in regard to the homestead. He wished, too, to stand for a moment by a grave that was precious to him, and whisper: "Mother, I have done it. It is as you wished."

Old friends greeted him gladly and hoped he had come back to stay. There were warm handclasps and expressions of deep regard. An intimate friend of his own profession, into whose office he stepped, said, after the first greetings:

"I am up to my eyes in work, Fletcher, and with all the rest I was foolish enough to promise to make a speech. Yes, actually I did, but I am so interested in the cause I could not help it. It is a thousand pities, my friend, that you are not a thorough-going temperance man. I have an ap

pointment to speak at a rousing meeting in —— to-morrow night, but I do not see how I am to get away. If only you were the right sort, I could send you in my place. I feel a good deal worried about it."

Dr. Fletcher's face expressed surprise and delight when the name of the city was mentioned, and then he said:

"I will go with pleasure."

"Man alive! You don't know what you're saying. It is a temperance meeting, and they expect me to speak from a medical point of view."

"I shall be glad to represent you as nearly as I can," Dr. Fletcher reiterated.

"You could not represent me, my dear fellow; that is, if you hold the same opinions upon this subject which you once did."

"But I do not. I am now a radical of the radicals."

Dr. Barnes gave him a quick look which read nothing but sincerity. Then he came over and took his hand again, saying:

"God bless you, Fletcher; sit down here and tell me all about it."

Considering that the place mentioned was the home of Fern Redpath, it would seem that Dr. Fletcher would not be eager to declare his altered views to her for the first in the midst of a great assemblage, if perchance she might be present.

But it was like him to wish to make his surrender to truth so hearty and unequivocal that there should be no possibility of doubt. If she should be there, he reasoned, it might be to her a joyful surprise. Besides, he now counted it a privilege to bear testimony in a large meeting.

Seated upon the platform, he cast his eyes over the sea of faces to find one only. He should know it at once, be it ever so far away. He took the seats in their order, and eagerly scanned each part of the house. What a variety of types! It would have been interesting as a study at any other time. They were all there. The rotund, easy-going woman; the dignified woman, with slow-drooping eyelids; the nervous one, with jerky movements and sharp eye, and the funny one, bubbling over with laughter. There were thin, careworn faces, and sad ones, and tired ones; faces bright, dull, cold, stolid, eager; and rarely a face where peace had left its benediction. But the one face which adjectives would not describe was not there. Slightly back of him, on the left of the platform, in a retired corner half-hidden by tall palms, sat the object of his search. Almost near enough to touch each other, and yet neither knew it!

Fern Redpath's somewhat fastidious mother had not at first favored her daughter's plan to engage in active temperance work, which would unavoidably bring her before the public. But

little by little her prejudices had given way. She could not deny anything to one who ministered to her invalid life with such tender devotion. As time went on she became interested herself, and aided the cause pecuniarily, as well as by advice and sympathy.

"Are you sure that you are comfortable now, mother?" Fern said that evening of the meeting, after she had drawn the curtains and placed a fresh magazine and the evening paper on the table by her side. "I shall not be gone long." And then she bent over her mother's chair and received a kiss and an admonition.

"Take good care of yourself, dear; I wish you need not go out to-night; you look tired now."

"O, no! I am fresh as possible. Somehow I feel elated to-night, as if a great event were about to come to pass. Those strange thrills pass over me, and my heart leaps up at something, I know not what. It is a childish state of mind which used to visit me long ago when I was young, and something lovely always followed it," Fern said, between a sigh and a laugh, and then added:

"I do not know what could come to me, I am sure, that would greatly rejoice me, except some good temperance news."

Then the mother and daughter exchanged looks, and the eyes of one said: "Dear child, I know you have missed the flower of womanhood. I grieve for you."

The other eyes, wistful and subdued, answered only: "God's will is best."

Do finely organized natures possess a subtle sense to which the air whispers indefinable hints of things to come? Fern Redpath wondered something of the sort before that evening was over.

She was attending to a small matter of business with the secretary when Dr. Fletcher was introduced, and did not hear the name, but was presently awakened to the fact that the voice was strangely familiar. She had heard that a Dr. Barnes was to be the next speaker. How could that voice — peculiar in its clearness — belong to but just one person in the world? and he — he would not be reasoning in that fine, strong way, on that side of the question. It was a forceful speech, coming from a physician. She followed his argument with delight. He was making astounding statements in regard to the effect of alcohol on the tissues of the brain, and in eloquent language depicting the diabolical process of defaming and destroying the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

It was no mere perfunctory work to fill an appointment; his soul was in it, whoever he was. As he turned and took his seat, Fern had a full view of his face. It was Paul Fletcher! She sat in a tumult of joy while Elsie Chilton sang. She herself was to be called upon next. How could

she speak the things she had prepared? She felt more like singing or praying; to give vent to thankfulness, to overflowing praise. Her prayer was answered abundantly. Paul was changed. He had returned to her. To her? Ah! that made her heart throb wildly. His wife might be down there in the audience, looking proudly up at him. Fern would have given much just then to be able to slip away out of it all. Her head reeled. Was she going off into unconsciousness? But her will asserted itself. She stepped to a door at the back of the platform, took a long breath of fresh air and a drink of water, and by the time the song was finished stood pale and calm, girded up to do her part.

As Dr. Fletcher, during his absence, had no means of receiving news of Fern except by directly addressing her or her friends, he had not heard of her public work in the temperance cause. Imagine, then, his amazement when the chairman announced that Miss Fern Redpath had promised to speak to them briefly. The delight of hearing that name, not joined to another name, filled his mind for the first few seconds to the exclusion of every other thought. Only her lovely profile could be seen from where he sat, but he did not trust himself to look at her till the musical voice broke the peculiar silence which an audience assumes when a favorite is about to address it. He had always cherished an unconquerable aversion to a woman's

"haranguing" on the platform. He could not for in instant, though, consider these words that Fern Redpath was speaking as being described by that word. This was a gracious, graceful woman pleading in a womanly way that these her brothers who had power and strength would put off the yoke from the necks of the weak. It was the Christlike spirit speaking in her, herself of no repute, making common cause with the lowly, recognizing in a poor woman of the penitentiary a sister, a soul. He listened in wonder, his reverence for her deepening with every word. And this was the treasure he had perhaps lost by his own insane actions! Fool and blind!

The moment the meeting was dismissed Fern hastened away. If they were to meet, it must not be there before so many curious eyes. She found her mother in the library, comfortable and interested in a new book, so she wandered off into the parlor and sat alone in a shadowy light, grateful for outward quiet when the tumult of her own thoughts were so intense.

But there was a ring at the door, an eager inquiry, and in another moment Dr. Fletcher and Fern Redpath stood face to face in the same room where they had parted five years before. A half-hour later Mrs. Redpath looked up from her book at the sound of a soft rustle, and beheld her daughter, transfigured, it appeared. The soft bloom of early girlhood was on her face, and her

eyes shone like stars. It was not her pale, quiet daughter, nor her calm voice, which said with rapturous tones:

"Mother, it has happened! a beautiful thing! Paul has come back. He is changed. He is everything that is right and good. Oh! it is so wonderful."

The mother laid down her book, and for an instant a suspicion of her daughter's sanity crossed her mind as she said:

"Dear child, what is it?"

CHAPTER VII.

IS THERE ANY HELP?

MRS. REMINGTON was looking over a list of names her husband had just handed her. They were the names of church members upon whom she was to call.

"Mrs. Philip King," she read; "that is singular. Lena Brooks, my classmate, married a young man of that name. I do not recall where he was from. I wonder if it can be the same. I attended their wedding two years before we were married, but I have never seen or heard of them since. Lena was a lovely girl. How delightful if she should turn up here a member of our church. Have you met any people of that name, John?"

Mr. Remington searched his memory, but could recall no one.

"Well, I shall go this very afternoon and see," she said, consulting her list again. "These places are rather near together. I think I can make about a dozen calls to-day. I can help you ever so much this winter, John, with Aunt Hannah here to see that all goes right with Baby in my absence."

"Take care, dear," her husband said; "be content with six calls in half a day. You know your besetment to lay out ten times as much work as you ought to do."

Two hours afterwards Mrs. Remington stood before the door of the house No. 11 Miller Street, which had been designated as the residence of Mrs. Philip King, and lifted an old-fashioned knocker. In its best days it must have been a roomy farmhouse, before the city stretched out and the farm was cut into diminutive lots, but it now had a decidedly tenement-house look, with its worn steps and one half of a front blind swinging loose. Mrs. Remington told herself, as she cast a look over the dingy house, that it was absurd to suppose that her fastidious friend lived in such a place.

She was positively sure of the absurdity when a childish, high-keyed voice called, "Come in," and she found herself in the barest room she had ever been in that was supposed to be habitable. The floor was without cover of any sort, and there was no furniture except a plain wooden table, a couple of wooden chairs and a cook-stove. The child, a little crippled boy of six, with a fair, sweet face and large blue eyes, sat in a small wheeled chair.

"Will you take a seat?" he said, with a grave little dignity. "My mamma went to the grocery. She will be back very soon."

"Yes, I will wait, thank you, if you will tell me your name and let me talk with you a little."

"My name is Charles Carroll King," the little fellow said, holding his head slightly higher as he spoke it.

"What a very nice name! It has historic associations, hasn't it?" she said, instinctively feeling that she need not put her words into baby language for this wise-eyed boy.

"Yes'm. You mean that a man of that name signed the Declaration of Independence, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I do. Do you know about Charles Carroll, of Carrollton?"

"O, yes'm! We belonged to his family. He is a — a" — he said flushing, and struggling for a word.

"An ancestor of yours?"

"Yes'm, that is it."

"Well, I hope you will be a brave man like him."

Mrs. Remington soon won the heart of little Carroll. She admired the pictures he was coloring, and asked him to read to her from a well-worn book which bore his name, and found him, as she expected, far in advance of boys much older than himself. When she told him that he read well, he answered in a slow, sweet way:

"I ought to. You see, I have more time than other boys. I cannot run on errands or play out

doors, or do a good many things that they do. But I mean to work hard and study, and know things. Some day I am going to write books and make a whole lot of money."

"What will you do with your money?"

"Buy things for mamma," he said, his large eyes shining with the joy which the faith of childhood gives. No "ifs" and "maybes" in its calculations.

Mrs. Remington was somewhat ill at ease while she waited. If it should turn out that her old friend lived here, how embarrassing to both to meet under such circumstances! And yet it was most improbable. There could easily be two persons of the same name, and, whoever lived here, it was her duty to call upon them. She was not long kept in doubt. The first glance at the mother when she entered settled the question. It could be none other than the one she had known in her student days as Lena Brooks, although her bright color had given place to pallor and there were lines of care on her thin face; the eyes, too, told a story of suffering endured, of humiliations and dead hopes. Tell-tale eyes which will not keep secrets.

"Is it possible?" she said, as her visitor arose and extended her hand, "Mattie Kirke! I should have known you anywhere. You do not look a day older," and she sighed half-enviously as she read in the serene face and happy eyes of her old

friend the record of a life that had realized the fulfillment of all sweet promise.

For the instant she forgot in her glad greeting but that they were back in the old seminary and "Mattie" had dropped into her room for a moment. The mortification of it all came upon her, though, as she realized that she had no comfortable chair to offer her friend. What a bare, desolate place her home was! and a burning blush dyed her face. Mrs. Remington, with her usual tact, appeared not to notice her embarrassment. She talked about their own return to the city, and how delighted she was to find that her old friend lived in that suburb and was a member of their church.

"No, we have not been here long," Mrs. King said, in answer to a question, "though my husband used to live here when he was a boy. An old friend of his father's offered him, a year ago, a pleasant position with him in this city. He is growing old and needed a younger man to attend to some of the business. We are not very well arranged for comfort yet, you see," she said, trying to smile, "but we hope to do better by and by. We have been unfortunate."

Mrs. Remington again turned the conversation by saying: "I enjoyed a short visit with your little son. He is going to make a fine reader."

The little fellow looked up quickly at his mother, his wistful eyes relaxing into a rarely sweet smile.

She smoothed his short curls with a tender touch, and sighed as she said:

"Dear boy, I am glad he gives promise of being fond of books. It will help to pass the hours away."

Questions about him came to the visitor's lips, but she would not allow herself to speak them within hearing of one whose face looked like a sensitive plant. It was when she was taking her leave and stood for a moment in the small hall with the door closed that she asked in a low tone:

"Does little Carroll suffer much?"

A look of pain came into the mother's face as she answered:

"At times, severely, but he is a brave little soul."

"What is the disease? Is there no help for him?"

"It is a difficulty with the spine, and I fear there is no permanent help for him."

"What is the cause of it? Has he been so from birth?"

The sympathetic tones were not those of mere curiosity. The look of anguish that came into the mother's face then, smote the other woman to the heart.

"Do not speak of it," she hastened to say, "if it be too painful."

"It was caused by an injury," was whispered

with white lips, and then she shut them close as if fearful that another word should escape her.

"There is some mystery about it all," Mrs. Remington told herself on the way to the next place. "What can be the reason of such extreme poverty? Poor Lena!" She visited many other homes that afternoon, where evidently the burden of care or sorrow lay heavy upon their inmates. There were few, if any, without at least a seeming shadow.

"I am almost ashamed to come back to such a bright, pleasant home," she told Aunt Hannah, as she sat just at dusk by the open fire in her own sitting-room, laughing at Baby John as he tumbled about on a fur rug. "There are so many wretched, uncomfortable, sorrowing homes, I feel guilty enjoying my blessed lot; all this brightness and beauty, and you and John and Baby John to come home to."

"Well, just take it all and be thankful," said Aunt Hannah. "It won't help them any for you to be wretched. Don't go to hunting up misery when you haven't any; it will come fast enough. You need not feel guilty, child, any more than a flower that was planted in the sunshine. Your part is to be just like the flower; give out all the sweetness you can to comfort and chirk up others, and when the cold winds come, bow your head and take them too, meekly, just as the flower does."

"What nice little sermons you preach, Aunt Hannah. I ought to carry a note-book in my pocket and take down some of them."

It was a few days after this that Mrs. Remington, sitting one forenoon in her sunny chamber, was summoned to the parlor to meet a caller, and found Mrs. King.

"I am so glad to see you, Lena," she said. "Come right upstairs to my room, where we can be uninterrupted; besides, it will seem more like old times."

Mrs. Remington began talking of school days, giving bits of news and making inquiries about classmates, but she saw that her friend's interest was only forced. Presently Mrs. King asked:

"Mattie, can you listen to a long, sad story? I want to tell you my troubles. I shall be crazed if I keep them to myself longer. I want advice and help, if help is to be found. There is not another soul in this city that I would willingly speak to of them. I tried to put on a brave face and hide everything the day you called, but you must have surmised that something was very wrong with us, and I may as well tell you the whole truth at once. My husband is the slave of a fearful appetite. When he was growing into manhood he had a severe illness which left his lungs weak. The physician advised that a certain amount of brandy be taken daily.

"After taking it a few months, he grew to be fond

of it, and gradually increased the quantity, even to the point of intoxication. He was wretched when he tried to do without it. In short, he had discovered that an almost unconquerable thirst assailed him at the sight or smell of liquor. The habit was firmly fixed upon him. Then he became alarmed, and resolved never to taste liquor again in any form as long as he lived. It was a fearful struggle, but he conquered and gained the victory forever, as he supposed. When we were married I had never heard of this experience. He felt that it was a thing of the past, and he need not trouble me with the matter. You know every one considered my prospects very bright at the time of my marriage, and they were. My husband is well educated, and is thought to have no mean natural talent. He was a partner in a law firm, where he was prized for his keen brain.

"We were very happy those first few months, especially as my husband, who had long thought he was a Christian, decided to unite with the Church. It is a strange thing to say, but from the day he took his first communion we have not known a peaceful hour. I never had thought much about the wine used on that occasion. I supposed it was all alike, and of course the right sort. It never entered either of our minds that there could be death and sorrow in that cup. That one taste of wine made him insane for more. He rushed away without speaking to me of his trouble, and walked

for miles, trying to escape from the demon which possessed him. It ended by his coming home that night intoxicated! If I live a hundred years and go through tortures, I am sure nothing will ever equal the horrors of that night.

"I was as much amazed and confounded as you would be if your husband were to come home in that state. Of course, Philip was utterly crushed by what had happened. He vowed that he would nevermore allow himself to be overcome. But when he came home the next evening, I saw that he had been drinking again. He told me that the smell of the liquor as he passed the saloons perfectly crazed him, after having once tasted it again.

"That was the end of all happiness. He has struggled against it like one fighting for his life, but the will seems powerless. There will be a month, perhaps, when he gains the victory. Then he yields and spends everything he can get for weeks. He strips the house of furniture and sells his clothes and our own. He has begged me, when he is himself, to leave him and let him go to destruction as fast as possible, but I will not; I cannot. I consider it a disease. I have thought he was not morally responsible. There is nothing to fear from him any more, because, since a terrible thing happened, some sort of intuition leads him to keep away from his home when not in a fit state to come to it.

"It was when little Carroll was six months old that he came home one night in a perfectly frantic state, and before I could interfere, snatched up Baby and gave him a fling into the air. He fell with his little back across the side of the crib. I thought the breath had gone from him at first, but he revived. The result was what you saw — a spinal difficulty. The sight of the dear boy crippled for life makes his father utterly miserable, and yet even that does not cure the terrible habit. I sometimes think remorse and regret become intolerable at times, and tempt him to put himself into a state of forgetfulness. Step by step we have gone down. Philip was asked to leave the firm to which he belonged. Then we were almost on the point of starvation. I have now no near relatives to appeal to, and my husband was too proud to ask help of his. At last, a friend of his father's, Mr. Renwick, heard of the straits we were in, and invited him to come here and assist him and take a new start. He is in the real estate business, so he opened an office in this suburb, because there was no liquor sold here, and put Philip in charge of it. For several weeks all went well, and I really began to hope. We took a pleasant little house, and Mr. Renwick helped us to furnish it plainly. But it did not last. A saloon was opened almost next door to the office, and it was the old story. Philip neglects his business, and Mr. Renwick is almost out of patience.

"Now, why am I humiliating myself to tell you all this? Do not, I beg you, reveal it to any one but your husband. No one but God and us know how little Carroll came to be helpless. I tell you, because I want you to know the whole thing as it is, and see if there can be anybody in Heaven or earth who can or will help us. I have not had any hope for a long time until after your call, then I began to think perhaps God had sent your husband to this church to help us, for I could not have told this to one who was an utter stranger."

Mrs. Remington had been silently wiping away the tears as the sad story went on, and now the quick word of sympathy and assurance of all aid that they could give was not wanting.

"My husband," she said, "is all on fire about this subject. You may be sure that if it is possible to do anything to suppress the saloon here, he will find it out. He is wiser about laws and their technicalities that I am; meantime, he will become acquainted with your husband and try to influence him. Don't despair, dear Lena," she said, giving her one of the old-time schoolgirl embraces, "God will surely pity you and hear our prayers if we trust him. He has all power on earth as well as in Heaven, you know. I wonder," she went on, after thinking a moment, "whether, if it could be brought about, your husband would be willing to go to an inebriate asylum? Did you ever think of it?"

"Mr. Munson spoke to me about it," Mrs. King answered, the color flashing into her face an instant, "the other day when he met me on the street. He is a professing Christian, and owns the largest distillery in this locality. It is just outside the city. He said he had noticed that my husband was getting into a bad way; that he was sorry to see it. He felt kindly toward me, and would do anything in his power to aid me. He went on to say that it was a great pity that one should not be able to exercise the self-control that belonged to a true gentleman, but when such was the case there was a remedy that had proved efficacious in some instances, and that was the inebriate asylum. If Mr. King would consent to go and co-operate in a cure, he thought he could get him in there, so that it would not be much expense to me, as he was on the board of directors of such an institution.

"I did not know till then that I was capable of such indignation as took possession of me. I waited a moment till I could speak calmly, and then I told him I thought it very fitting that a man who was engaged in manufacturing drunkards should provide a place in which to cure them; it was a mere matter of justice. 'Yes, you can help me,' I said, 'and you can help thousands of other women at the same time. You can put out the fires of that distillery which is dealing out death to us. How dare you, when you are rolling up your millions by means of it, mock your victims by

kindly offering them such aid?' Then I walked on and left him standing there. I heard afterward that he said that probably I myself was the cause of trouble in our home; that I had a fearful temper. Perhaps I did wrong, but even a worm will not bear everything. O, Mattie! this is my horrible besetment, to hate liquor dealers, and hate men who make the license laws, and despise all hypocritical Christians like Mr. Munson. I used to wonder when I was a girl why people found it so hard to forgive injuries. I thought I was full of charity and pity toward all, even wrong-doers. How little people know themselves until they are sorely tried."

"I am sure I should be tempted in the same way, dear," Mrs. Remington said.

Just then there was a knock at the door, and the servant brought in a tray. Aunt Hannah knew who was the visitor, that it was a soul to be ministered to for Christ's sake, and that she would shrink from meeting others, so, as it was after the noon hour, she arranged a tempting lunch with a pot of hot tea and sent it up.

"Come, Lena, draw your chair up; you will feel the better for a little refreshment," Mrs. Remington said as she poured the tea. "Aunt Hannah has remembered us. She always does remember to do little, nice things. Sometime you must know her. She is a whole gospel of love and comfort, and she will help us to pray for your husband."

Mrs. Remington sat a long time absorbed in sad thoughts after her friend had gone. Never before had she come in contact with such sharp contrasts as this wan-faced, broken-hearted woman presented to the happy, care-free girl she had known in former days.

The result of a conference between herself and her husband was that he called that very afternoon at the real estate office of which Philip King was in charge. He found him in, and in his right mind as well, sitting at a desk at work, though with a sad, gloomy face.

"It is just such bright spirits as this one that Satan loves to get hold of either to press into service or to destroy," the visitor thought within himself, as a pair of keen eyes under a broad brow looked half-defiantly into his. Mr. King had no wish to meet this other man of his own age who was making of life a grand success, while his own was a failure. But Mr. Remington was no bungler in his Master's work. He knew that he must first win the heart of the one whom he would save. He had come ostensibly to obtain information in regard to property in this part of the city. Aunt Hannah had asked him to find something good in the way of an investment, and why not invest in real estate?

Mr. King's slightly haughty manner gave place to his natural courtesy when the errand was made known. He was all interest, and in a few rapid

words sketched the advantages of this and that piece of property, bringing out clearly the chief points, accomplishing in a short space of time what would have taken hours for some men.

Little by little other topics were introduced, books, authors, politics. An hour passed away most enjoyably to both. Philip King forgot his gloom, and was surprised to find his mind stimulated to high thought, as it had not been in a long time. He felt himself strangely drawn to this man, whom he had not known an hour before, and heartily invited him to come again. The invitation was accepted, for Mr. Remington wished him to feel that he was a friend and brother. He was in the office daily, now on business, and again to leave a book, or for a little friendly chat. Mr. King's attendance at church became quite regular, and all hoped for the best.

It was during one of his intervals of sobriety that all this went on, when the evil spirit seemed exorcised and the man was restored to control of himself.

Mr. Remington had been diligent in another direction as well. He had appealed to Mr. Hargrave, to Earle Mason and others, to rally to the work of closing the one saloon that had, after long protest on the part of the people, been opened in that part of the city. They were now aiming to convict the proprietor of selling contrary to law, as they were sure he did, and were watching their

opportunity to arrest him. The small number of determined spirits who had banded together to war with this foe had money in the treasury for the purpose, for, like the brave men who fought in another conflict, they had pledged "their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor" to this cause. It was not long before they secured an indictment against the owner of the saloon, and were now awaiting the slow process of the law.

CHAPTER VIII.

"IN BONDS."

ONE morning Mr. Remington stepped into Mr. King's office, but found him absent. He went several times that day with the same result. After another day had passed, he grew uneasy and called at his home. Mrs. King met him with swollen eyes, and when he asked for her husband made no attempt to conceal the fact that she did not know of his whereabouts.

"I had hoped so much from your influence over him," she said, "but nothing, nothing is of any avail. He will be away for weeks now, perhaps, and a telegram has just come saying that his mother is at the point of death. I have no idea where to look for him."

"Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." Mr. Remington was one who not only faithfully expounded this text, but acted upon it as well. This necessitated a search for Philip King. He inquired first in the saloon in that suburb, receiving impudent replies from the bartender to pressing questions as to when he was

last there. The man declared he had not been there since the morning of the day before.

Pushing on down town, he found the object of his search. He was just being thrust out of one of the poorer class of saloons, one which Philip King would not have entered had his mind been clear. He had been lying there in a drunken stupor for some time, and the proprietor said he was "tired of it."

"Ah! I see," Mr. Remington said, "I presume this victim of yours is out of money. You have no further use for him."

The man gave him an evil look, went into his shop, and banged the door.

Mr. Remington took Mr. King by the arm and walked the street with him until the keen air had somewhat set right the poor brain, and then told him the sad news. The dazed man took in enough to have a dim perception that he must start on a journey at once, and so made pitiful efforts to recover himself.

Mr. Remington did everything for his comfort that could be done, and by the time the train started he was rational enough to experience bitter shame and sorrow, and to promise his benefactor that he would taste no liquor while he was gone. It was a fierce fight. He had all he could do to keep from rushing out at stations to get a drink.

The old mother, gasping her life away, had often asked through the hours of the night:

"Hasn't Philip come yet?"

She had given this son to the Lord in a peculiar manner, and she had prayed for him as one who will not be denied. It was a sore trial now to her that she had come down to the gates of death and the Lord had not given her her heart's desire. But faith did not fail. She could still look up and say: "Lord, I believe."

When at last her son was by her side, she took his hands in hers and whispered, "Philip, promise me that you will never taste liquor again," and Philip, his heart breaking with sorrow, kissed her cold forehead and promised. He meant it. He never meant anything in his life more. He vowed it again over the sweet old face lying still and white just before the coffin lid closed for the last time.

He sat down and wrote his wife about it, and told her that never again should liquor pass his lips. He bade her hope and take courage, he would start again and life should be brighter for her, and he would atone as far as he could for the past.

"I thank you, dear wife," he wrote, "that you have been to me like an angel of goodness; that you have never reproached me when I so much deserved it. Meet me at the station and let us never part again."

While in the train his mind was going back over the days of his boyhood; visiting the old place had brought them freshly before him. Keen

regret and remorse took possession of him as he realized that his mother's last days had been embittered by him. It would seem that he had brought sorrow to all who belonged to him. As he sat in absorbed, gloomy thoughts, a man before him took from his valise a bottle, one of those hideous flat ones, poured out a glass of brandy and drank it off.

. At sight and smell of the vile stuff, it was as if waiting demons entered into the being of that tempted man. A raging thirst took possession of him. He felt like snatching that bottle and draining it. He was about to say: "For Heaven's sake, give me a drink." But now the train stopped and broke the horrible spell. "Twenty minutes for supper!" came the word; and there, staring the wretched man in the face, was the red sign of the saloon. He shut his eyes so that he could not see it. He set his teeth hard and clinched his fists. He brought before his mind his mother's dying words and her still, cold face. He recalled his promise to his wife. He vowed he would not yield. He did everything but cry: "Lord, save or I perish." He forgot that.

"I will go and get a cup of coffee," he said to himself. He had to pass the fated door on his way to the restaurant. Why was the whole air filled with the pungent, hellish odor? Had one of the fiends who knows the power of it poured some outside to entrap a soul? It had done its

work. He rushed through that doorway of the pit. What was a vow to a dead mother and a waiting, broken-hearted wife weighed in the balance with a glass of brandy to this poor slave?

Despite previous disappointments, Mrs. King's hopes had risen since receiving her husband's letter. She prepared an inviting supper, talked cheerily to Carroll of papa's coming, and was promptly in waiting at the station. Her heart sank like lead when he did not appear. She tried to think that he had missed his train and would come on the next one, but her fears were that he had stopped in the city and was by this time steeped in liquor, which was the truth. The sad wife retraced her steps over the lonely way, glad of the falling shadows so that her tears might flow unrestrained. Surely one of God's kind angels walked beside her in the darkness and kept her from sinking utterly. She said, almost cheerfully, as she met the eager face of her boy:

"Papa did not come, dear. Perhaps he missed the train, and will be here in the morning."

But the little fellow's lip quivered and a tear stood on his cheek.

"Don't cry, dear," his mother said. "Be a brave boy."

"Why, mamma," he sobbed, "you feel bad, too. There's cry in your voice."

It was not until several days afterward that Philip King, awakened from his drunken sleep,

stood in the city street, looking up and down it in gloomy apathy. The sky was dark, the air chill, and occasional snowflakes melting on the pavement increased the dreariness. Now the man was going through the torments of the afterward. Wrecked, soul and body, he felt himself, as prosperous-looking men hurried by where he stood pale and shivering. Shame and remorse filled his soul. The fiend who had followed him the last few days, whispered in his ear: "You are good for nothing. You are a curse to all who belong to you. Go and jump off that dock and drown yourself."

The dark waters of the lake at the foot of the street beckoned him, and he went. But one of God's messengers followed him. Just as he reached the spot he felt a hand upon his arm, and turned to see Mr. Remington, who laid kind, firm hold of him, drew his arm through his own, and turned him about.

"Let me alone," groaned Mr. King. "You cannot save me. I cannot do right. I have tried. I am utterly powerless."

"God is not," Mr. Remington said. "You are coming with me now to get a cup of coffee. Then we will talk about it."

Mr. Remington believed that in a disease of this kind the true way was to apply directly to the great Physician, and, dropping all other refuges, by an act of faith rest upon Christ only to do this great thing for him. He had repeatedly

urged this upon Mr. King, but as yet he had seemed unable to grasp it. Like too many others, he failed to apprehend that an absolute trust in Christ will accomplish that which struggles and scourgings on our part could never do.

During the last few days Mr. Remington, in consultation with one of the directors of the inebriate asylum, had learned that the way was open for Mr. King to enter if he chose, and defray his expenses by keeping books. His wife was anxious for him to go. Months before she had applied for a situation as teacher in the public school of that suburb, feeling that they must have something less precarious than her husband's earnings to depend upon. She had been promised a place as soon as there should be a vacancy. This had now unexpectedly occurred through the sudden resignation of one of the teachers. It had come to Mrs. King just when she needed it most — at the beginning of winter, when the prospect of sheltering her child from cold and hunger had begun to look dark.

Before Mr. King went home that night, Mr. Remington had persuaded him to start anew and go to the inebriate asylum for perhaps a year. It had not been difficult to do.

"I am willing to go anywhere, or do anything, even to plucking out an eye or parting with my right hand, if it would but free me from this curse and bring joy to the dearest, best woman on this

earth," the wretched man declared. And added: "If I were fit for another world, I should pray to be taken out of this, and have my miserable life, which is only a torment to others, ended. But I will gladly go to the asylum and give my whole soul to the work of reformation."

His good friend furnished him means to start at once, staid by him until he left, and then accompanied him to the very door of the institution, for which service he incurred the still deeper hatred of the evil-eyed man who kept the saloon, it being well known by him that Mr. Remington was also active in procuring his arrest.

The Remingtons tried to persuade Mrs. King to come and spend the winter with them, but she absolutely refused the kindness, saying that it was better for her not to break up her home, even though it was a poor one; that she wished her husband to feel that they were there waiting for him, and moreover, Mrs. Prime, a good old woman who lived upstairs, would, for a certain compensation, care for her boy in her absence. Mrs. Remington sat in Mrs. King's desolate room as she urged it, and while admiring the courage and self-reliance of her friend, she sighed as she thought of the weary days in store for her; of how the delicate nature would be burdened and jarred by coming in contact with all sorts of children, many of them brought up in a rough way. And then, to come after a day of toil, to a dreary, desolate home!

It was hard. She resolved to do what she could to brighten her lot. To this end she must interest Elsie Chilton in them, who possessed not only a heart, but a purse.

"Let me tell you a story, dear," Mrs. Remington said to that young lady, when she happened in two or three days afterward.

She began at the beginning, picturing her old schoolmate, young and joyous, with not a care or sorrow, and Philip King in his manly beauty and brilliancy, the fair prospects, the blighted home, the sad hearts.

There were tears on Elsie's cheeks when she had finished.

"Oh! why must it be?" she cried. "Misery everywhere on account of that horrible stuff. It makes me so wretched to think that my own father is a stockholder in a distillery. But I cannot help that. I have done all I can. Because it is so, though, I am going to spend every cent of money I can get hold of to help those who are in trouble from that cause. It is but just. Wouldn't it be fearful if money made in that way could speak and tell of cold and hunger and sorrow and wrecked lives and lost souls?"

"Yes," Mrs. Remington answered, with vehemence; "have it stamped upon it, 'This is the price of blood.'"

"I have a bright idea," Elsie Chilton told her Aunt Emily one morning, as they were talking

over plans for Christmas, which was near at hand; "come up into the attic, and see if it is not."

The usual collection of cast-off furniture belonging to well-to-do attics was there, hoarded from that feeling of reluctance to give up entirely articles which belong to family history.

"Aunt Emily, help me," said Elsie, leading the way to some dark corners; "I want to furnish from these relics two rooms for the Kings."

During the last few weeks Elsie had been a frequent visitor in that home. She usually spent an hour with Carroll at least twice a week, and often looked in upon him for a moment at other times, occasionally taking him to drive. Besides her own bright presence, she brought books and games, and sometimes a basket of fruit. It is needless to say that the boy loved her, and looked forward to these visits with eagerness. So Aunt Emily had heard much of him and his mother, and her heart had gone out to them in strongest sympathy. She answered now:

"An excellent plan, dear; so much better than to have them wasting here."

"I think," Elsie said, as she dusted off an old bureau, "that some of these things will be just what is needed. But what we shall do for a carpet is a puzzle."

"Your father asked me to have the one in the library replaced by new. The old one will serve your purpose, won't it? It is not much worn."

"Capitally! It is pretty, too, and the one that used to be in my room will do for their bedroom. How nice! See this pretty little rocker; that shall go. And this dear old sofa; I had many a good read curled up on that when I was a little girl. Old things are better than new to me."

She went off then, and soon returned enveloped in a large apron and with a bottle of furniture polish, taking great delight in selecting just what articles were needed, and rubbing them with her own hands.

"But how can you give them to one like Mrs. King?" Aunt Emily asked; "she may not relish being under so great obligations to you."

"Oh! I have thought that all out. I am going to have great fun at it. Mrs. Remington said she should invite them there to spend Christmas. I will have the things taken and placed in her house when she is away, and I will bribe that old lady who lives upstairs to let us in and keep my secret. Then Mrs. King will never know to whom to feel indebted. She will fancy it was Santa Claus brought them, or the angels, maybe."

"One blue-eyed angel," said Aunt Emily.

Accordingly, on Christmas Day, while the Remingtons tried to make Mrs. King and little Carroll forget their sadness for a time, Elsie Chilton and Aunt Emily, by the aid of a man servant, turned the bare rooms into beauty and comfort. It was already as clean as hands could make it, so the

work of settling was not long. The bedroom was first made fair and pretty with the light carpet and a neat suite of furniture. In the living-room the worn, rusty cook-stove was replaced by a shining parlor cook. The floor had a thick, soft carpet, green with pink and white flowers. A round table wore a pretty cover. White muslin curtains draped the windows. Then there was a wide, old-fashioned sofa, an easy-chair, a rocker, and a new wheeled chair for Carroll upholstered with finest springs, softest padding and gay covering. This last was Aunt Emily's gift. All the other furniture were the treasures of the attic yielded up to make glad this Christmas Day. A monthly rose-bush, one of the finest in the Chilton conservatory, was placed in the sunny window, and then Elsie stood back and surveyed it all with more delight than she had ever manifested over any elegant furnishings in her own home.

"How many wicked attics there are in this city," exclaimed Aunt Emily, "hoarding up things that might be doing good to others!"

Mrs. King sighed as she turned the key of her door on her return that evening, thinking how bare and forlorn their home would seem to her child in contrast with the comfortable one they had just left. Mr. Remington had accompanied them, bringing Carroll in his arms from the carriage.

"Why, there is some mistake!" Mrs. King ex-

claimed, as her foot came in contact with a rug, and the light of a street lamp showed a neat oil cloth on the floor of the little hallway. "We are surely in the wrong house," throwing open the room door and revealing the glowing fire in the stove, the pretty carpet and the easy-chairs.

Mr. Remington hastened out to consult the number.

"Your house is No. 11, is it not? You are all right. This is the very house I took you from; I am sure of that."

But Mrs. King was not satisfied. She stepped out and examined for herself. It was surely her house. How could it be explained? She was like one dazed when she returned. Had somebody moved in and turned her out? Just as she was about to go and consult Mrs. Prime, who, by the way, was enjoying the whole thing peeping over the stair railing, she caught sight of a paper pinned to the wheeled chair. It read:

This chair and all the rest are Christmas things for a dear little boy named Charles Carroll King.

Your loving friend,

SANTA CLAUS.

"O, mamma!" said Carroll, his eyes glowing with excitement, "has Santa Claus really been here? But you told me there wasn't any truly Santa Claus. Then it was fairies — or — or may be 'twas angels!"

"Yes, good earthly angels, my boy, that the Heavenly Father sent to comfort his children," Mr. Remington said.

"I think," remarked Mrs. King, "you must know something of their whereabouts, my friend, and that you probably hold intimate relations with one of them."

"Indeed, I do not!" he declared. "It is as much of a mystery to me as to you. But isn't it cosey?"

"Delightful! beautiful! Who could have been so kind to us?"

When the whole thing was reported by her husband to Mrs. Remington, she smiled and remarked:

"I think I know of her whereabouts, and I should not be surprised if she resembled in person and character one of those veritable heavenly messengers."

CHAPTER IX.

A MODEL CHURCH.

THE time set for the trial of the saloon case having come, Mr. Remington and his co-workers found themselves one morning in the court-room, surrounded by a crew of blear-eyed men with lowering looks and whiskey breaths. The temperance party hoped that with such evidence as they had obtained, and with Earle Mason, clear-brained and enthusiastic, as counsel, their victory would be sure. And yet there was room for fear. What chance had they for justice among those who did not hesitate to perjure themselves and with a jury which was doubtless bribable?

Testimony came clear and abundant from highly respectable sources against the accused, but on the other side witness after witness testified that they knew the defendant well, and had never seen him violate the law; that he was a man of high moral character!

The jury did not agree, as a matter of course.

With the exception of two or three decided temperance men, it was made up of stupid, ignor-

ant fellows, the faces of some of them showing plainly that they were unfit to sit in judgment upon any case which involved a moral question.

A new trial was granted, another jury impaneled more to the satisfaction of the prosecution, and now rigid cross-examination brought out the fact that many of the witnesses for the defendant had perjured themselves, and that all of them were miserable victims of the saloon-keeper, and had been threatened horrible things by him unless their testimony was favorable. Earle Mason summed up in a convincing speech. The judge charged the jury to weigh evidence according to respectability of witnesses, and they promptly rendered a verdict of "guilty," without leaving their seats. Whereupon sentence to the full extent of the law followed.

This was a triumph indeed to the friends of temperance. They thanked God and took courage.

But the rum party was furious. There were mutterings of rage at the close of the trial, glances ominous of evil, and threatenings against their so-called persecutors. Especially were they incensed against Mr. Remington, and vowed with each other to have revenge.

The next morning, the minister's mail began to be seasoned by spicy communications. Almost every post for several days brought one. There was a package which proved to be a Bible with his name written on the fly-leaf. This was from

Mr. Bombiber, a broad man with a double chin and red face, who had flourished his fist at Mr. Remington, and admonished him in this manner as they left the court-room :

" If ministers would read their Pibles more, they would find out that going to law is petter not for them. They mus' go for peace an' not be pokin' der noses into der neighbors' pizness. If you haf no Pible, I send you one."

And sure enough here it was.

Mr. Remington had a hearty laugh over this. The next assault, though of a graver character, was funny as well. It was a greasy, misspelled missive, which read as follows :

This is to let ye NO that ye beter kePe yur I out. Some cold Led will setUL yur HasH if ye dONT stopp medLIN. A würd too the WYSE is sfishent. A FREnd.

Another one was decorated with skull and cross-bones. It breathed out threatenings and slaughter enforced by oaths, and was without signature.

And there was another type of letter, on elegant paper, of graceful chirography and expression, which exceedingly regretted that he had appeared as one of the prosecutors in a court of justice, and he a minister of the gospel of peace !

The writer hoped that he would receive this word of warning in the right spirit and hereafter keep within his own sphere.

This was signed by one of the members of his

own church, a lady who had hinted much the same to him before, and had, besides, criticised his condemnation of the use of wine by Christians.

She had also remarked to others that it was well enough for Mr. Remington, in a quiet way, to try to restrain the masses, ignorant and vulgar, who had never learned self-control; that was a good work; but to attempt to do the same thing for people of culture and refinement, savored of impertinence.

And there was still another letter from one who warned him, as a friend, that his life would not be worth twopence if he persisted in his course; that a desperate set of men had become incensed at him. Prudence would suggest that he desist from further action and persuade his friends to do the same, "For all recognize you," he wrote, "as the chief mover, however much you may attempt to disguise it."

And this was the man who, a few days before, when urged by Mr. Remington to vote for more radical measures, had replied:

"Enforce the laws you already have, and you will be all right."

Earle Mason came into Mr. Remington's study one afternoon, saying:

"I got my work done, Pastor, so I thought I would come over and hurrah a little with you over our late victory. How goes it? Your head is still on, I see."

If there was one voice above another which Mr. Remington rejoiced to hear inquiring for him, it was the same cheery one belonging to this young man. There was a deep attachment between the two, and Mr. Mason still continued to address his former pastor by that name, although, much to his regret, he felt compelled to continue his membership in the church of Kensett Square. His mother and he were the only ones left of the Mason family. She had life-long attachments in the old church and he would not suggest a change on his own account.

"O, yes! my head is all right," laughed Mr. Remington, "but I am the victim of numerous annoyances. An instrument called a 'tick tack' often raps at my window in the still hours of night. I have found cords stretched across my front door, and the other night I was burned in effigy at the corner where the saloon building stands. A fee to a policeman insures us from further annoyances about the house, but look here," he said, drawing the letters we have read, with several others of the same nature, from a drawer, "here are tremendous threats."

Mr. Mason laughed at some of them, and over others he looked grave.

"I am sorry," he said, "that we allowed you to appear so prominently in this matter. It may give you serious trouble. A clergyman ought not to be a target for rough men."

"Why not he as well as any man? I do not apprehend anything serious, though. These men are mostly cowards, I daresay."

"They are very angry, you must remember. Martin Boch's friends will try to avenge his languishing in prison, you may be sure. I saw black looks and heard fearful threats for all of us, so take care of yourself, my dear pastor. Don't expose yourself to peril unnecessarily.

"To change the subject, what sort of a people have you here?" he asked. "I hope they are an improvement upon your former charge in this city."

"They are, that is a fact. They are as good as gold. It promises to be a model church. One reason is, because they have neither poverty nor riches, with a few exceptions in both those states. They belong, as a rule, to that substantial, conscientious middle class, well-to-do, content with their lot, loving and reverencing their minister in the good, old-fashioned way. It is a delightful charge. Mind you, I said there are exceptions. There are a couple of wealthy families who think the world, especially this corner of it, was made for their particular use. The letter about 'the masses' came from one of those women. We hope to have grace to bear with them and do them good, or else that the kind Father will remove them from us, money and all. But we have some grand people here. There is Mr. Hargrave, always on the

right side of everything, a man of few words, but true as steel, liberal, everything which rejoices the heart of a pastor; and his wife and daughter are just like him. There are many others who possess the same qualities without his wealth, but are none the less highly prized. It is going to be a remarkable church in which to raise money, too."

"That is singular; new organizations usually have a hard time in that respect. And you say they are not wealthy. Do your two or three rich men bear all the burdens? That is not good for the church."

"Not by any means. Everybody gives. Every man, woman and child pledges to give a certain amount each week or month. Perhaps it is only a penny, but they give it. If they are away, they send it. They place their contributions in a sealed envelope, and no one knows what another gives, so there is no embarrassment if one can give but a small sum. We divide the sum between the church and its benevolences in a proportion agreed upon, and so far it works like a charm. The expenses are met and my salary is promptly paid monthly, besides having a generous sum to give away."

"And you need no fairs or oyster suppers to piece out?" asked Mr. Mason.

"Not yet. Nor any teasings and scoldings. They expect to give. They wish to. After one has devoted a certain amount of his income to give

it regularly as a part of worship, he enjoys bestowing it as he never could hap-hazard giving. Still, we should not have such easy sailing if we had not Mr. Hargrave and another man like him, who, when the people have done all they can, quietly make up the balance, quite secretly often. However, that will not be necessary as the church increases in numbers, if each continues to give a tenth of his income."

"However did you manage to get them into that way?"

"By starting out so in the beginning. I presented to them the subject of tithes; many were surprised to learn that a Jew did not regard the offering of a tenth of his income as a gift at all, but simply paying a debt. We discussed systematic beneficence in prayer meeting and distributed a masterpiece of a tract on giving. Thomas Kane is the author; the best thing I have ever seen. Then we voted to adopt the envelope system, leaving each one to determine the percentage for himself. Some fell in with the tithing idea at once; others followed, and now nearly one half of the members are in the habit of setting apart a tenth of their income."

"I have always thought it a shame to us," Mr. Mason said, "that our money seems to come less freely than in Romish churches. Of course, it is compulsory there, but they give it and expect to, and live besides. My mother's servant, Nora, said

the other day : 'If I haven't saved money enough to get a new shawl and give to the church, too, the church must have it, and my back must go widout till it earns it.' And it seems to be real devotion on her part. Our people as a rule are trained to consider their backs first, and then if there be any left give it to God's work."

"Can I not see Baby John before I go?" he said, rising. "I feel sort of tired out; as if nothing would rest me but a walk in the woods, or a lot of flowers, or a look at a sweet baby face."

Mr. Remington led the way into the back parlor, where were Aunt Hannah, Mrs. Remington and Elsie Chilton, who was playing a game of hide-and-seek with the baby. He forsook her at once, however, as soon as he saw his father and Mr. Mason, and was soon perched on the latter's shoulder, intent on examining all the articles in the room which were far out of reach, and so the objects which he most coveted.

The satisfaction on the gleeful little face was intense as he put forth one finger, and half in awe touched one of the globes of the chandelier ; then broke into shouts of glee when brought close to a large picture with cows in the foreground.

"Poor little fellow," said Aunt Hannah, "he wants to go back to the country and see a cow and get some good milk."

In the midst of the laughing and gay talk, Mrs. Remington was mentally going over her bill

of fare, and deciding that it would do, resolved within herself to keep those two people to dinner. But to the confusion of her plans, Elsie Chilton looked at her watch and declared that she must go. There was a protest from every member of the family, but she smilingly said her "good-night" and went out.

"I especially wished you to stay to-night, Elsie," Mrs. Remington said, following her into the hall. "Do, please; Mr. Remington will take you home."

"I cannot," she said; "I promised my father to go out with him after dinner. I shall but just have time to go home and get dressed. I cannot break my promise to my father, especially as he seems to have softened in his feelings toward me lately." And she went.

Mr. Mason accepted the invitation, although he could ill-conceal his disappointment at the departure of Miss Chilton. He had scarcely met her since his return, and then there were so many about her that he had no opportunity for conversation.

The two men, finding themselves alone for a half-hour before dinner, began to talk of Philip King, in whom Mr. Mason was greatly interested; of his fine qualities; of the man he might be if only he were forever free from his fetters; of the almost utter helplessness of anything short of a miracle working a permanent cure in such desper-

ate cases ; and then of the nobility and heroism of his wife.

"I should think," said Mr. Mason, "that with an unclouded brain and his temperament it would be perfect torture to him to stay there and know that his wife is at home slaving, as she must."

"I suppose it is, poor fellow, and all the more torture because he brought it upon himself. And yet, did he? When a boy of eighteen is ordered by his physician to take a certain amount of brandy each day or else the consequences will be fatal, there are few who would resist. Neither he nor his parents would hesitate in most cases."

"Miserable doctors!" exclaimed Mr. Mason. "Why do they not understand that it is preferable for one to die young rather than live to be a curse to himself and his friends, dying a thousand deaths instead of one? And physicians do not agree by any means that death would be the alternative. I know of several eminent medical men who use a substitute for alcohol with great success, and one of the greatest hospitals in Europe, located in London, has abandoned its use entirely."

"By the way," said Mr. Remington, "did you hear of the surprise Mrs. King had in her absence on Christmas Day? While she was spending the day with us, some mysterious beings (whom nobody can tell) took possession of her two bare rooms and furnished them comfortably, almost with elegance, and left beside a bin full of coal,

It strikes me, my brother, that possibly you know something of this — had a hand in it, perhaps."

"I am sorry to say I did not; wish I had. I should never have thought of an act so beautiful. A woman must have done it, or gotten it up at least."

"My wife strongly suspects Elsie Chilton of knowing all about it, but nothing can be learned from her."

"I have scarcely seen Miss Chilton since my return," said Mr. Mason; "she seems to avoid me Her father forbade me to enter his home just before I went away, so I cannot call upon her."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Remington; "how could he so insult you?"

"I think he must have imagined that his daughter had a fancy for me, because she wished to break her engagement with Mr. Palmer. However it was, I attended her home one evening when there had been some misunderstanding with their coachman as to time, for which service her father met us at the door, and with a haughty air announced that he would relieve me of further trouble in the care of his daughter, that night and henceforth, and that I was to understand that my presence in his house would not be desirable at any time."

"The villain!" and Mr. Remington rose and walked about in his excitement. "What did you say?"

"Well, of course I felt like knocking him down for a minute. I was more angry than I had ever been in my life. I was brought to myself by Miss Chilton's pleading eyes, which gave me a look as if to ask 'Be quiet; please go.' And I remembered this besides: 'Who when he was reviled, reviled not again.' So I had the grace given me to say nothing but 'Good-evening, Miss Chilton.'"

"It is not difficult to understand his enmity to you, after all," Mr. Remington replied. "You were my friend, opposed my dismissal, and said plain things on the subject of Christians deriving income from the liquor traffic; I see it all now. But Elsie seems to think he is softened somewhat since the death of his wife, and does not feel so bitterly toward the temperance reform as he did. He knows that she sings in the meetings, and he does not forbid it. Still, he may begin to realize that she is more than of age, and has a right to judge for herself. And then, his conscience may be troubling him. I wish it would."

Notwithstanding his pleasant visit, Mr. Mason realized as he walked home that something had occurred to depress him. When he came to analyze it, it was that Elsie Chilton had withdrawn almost as soon as he appeared. Had her father prejudiced her hopelessly against him?

CHAPTER X.

ONE EVENING.

ONE evening a week the Remingtons aimed to reserve for themselves, shut in from the outside world — except, perhaps, a stray caller or an invited guest who was especially dear — an evening devoted to the culture of the home, when care should be dismissed and they might draw nearer together around the table by the shaded lamp; read aloud favorite authors and discuss them; talk over news from friends and repeat Baby's last sentence of small, crooked words. They usually ended by singing old hymns. This made a cheery, pleasant time for Aunt Hannah, a thing which young people often forget to plan for — small joys thrown in as they hurry along, to beguile the tedium of the way to those whose steps are growing slow. Each looked forward to the time with pleasure, and made it a sort of festive occasion.

It was on one of these evenings that they were partaking of a six o'clock dinner. There was the aroma of oysters, celery, coffee, and other odors

belonging to good cheer, and there were flowers, oranges and dainty dishes. Elsie Chilton was the favored guest. Little John was allowed to come to the table when the guest was almost one of the family, as was Elsie. He sat now jubilant in his high-chair, though his meal consisted only of bread and milk. He was usually content with this, and enlivened the time by pretty babble, except occasionally when the naughty self, which lurks in all human kind, peeped out. At such times, little John was summarily removed from the table by his father and placed in a corner until he was good.

On this evening, after eating a few spoonfuls of his frugal supper, the spirit of mischief entered into him, and he made a dive for the sugar-bowl, bringing out a pink fist full of the article and scattering it about. Order being restored again, he was quiet long enough to have vigilance toward him somewhat relax, when he suddenly seized a potato from his mother's plate and plumped it into Elsie's coffee, laughing in high glee at the exploit. Then, as he caught sight of his father rising from his seat, assumed a look of deepest distress and penitence, declaring in pitiful tones : "Me dood ! me dood !" Elsie interceded for him, and one more trial was allowed. He managed to sustain a good character until dessert was served, and then he set his covetous eyes on a big orange. This fruit was allowed him morning and noon, but it was an inflexible law that he should have none at night.

He coaxed for it at first, in his pretty way; finding that unsuccessful, he demanded it with loud and angry outcries, which would not be silenced by the voice of reason or authority. Altogether he was a shameless acting baby, and patience ceased to be a virtue. It went to his mother's heart to see him carried screaming from the table and afterward standing with his face to the wall, leaning his head on his chubby arm, shaking with sobs. When no guests were present he was allowed to cry it out till he gave evidence of repentance, but now Jane was sent for to take him from the room. It was her afternoon out and she had not yet returned, so he cried on. Elsie Chilton cast sorrowful glances at him, and Aunt Hannah looked distressed. She did not always entirely agree with her nephew and his wife on family government. She had her "views," but she did not speak them out now, nor did she maintain that uncomfortable silence which oppresses and criticises by its very rigidity. She was that rare woman who knows how to be the "third one" of the household.

And now another interruption came. The servant brought word that a man was waiting at the door to see Mr. Remington, who found there a rough-looking fellow with hat drawn over his eyes, and so muffled that little of the face was to be seen. Mr. Remington eyed him suspiciously and questioned sharply when he made known his errand. He said that a sick man wished to see

the minister, and he had brought a carriage to take him.

The voice sounded so like that of a villain that Mr. Remington hesitated, remembering his promise to observe utmost caution in view of threats which had been made.

"Give me the address," he said; "I will go in the morning."

"Mornin' won't do; the man's a-dyin'. I told 'em you wouldn't come, but the sick feller said you would 'cause he'd heerd you preach and you had a mighty soft heart."

Concluding that his first impressions were wrong regarding the man, notwithstanding his instincts as to the voice, and deciding that he was but a simple laborer, Mr. Remington resolved to go. Making hasty preparation, he stepped into the carriage, dismissed his apprehensions, leaned back at his ease, and began to think out the text for next Sabbath's sermon.

When Mrs. Remington turned her attention to Baby John, he was found in a little heap in the corner fast asleep, with a tear like a dew-drop on his roseleaf cheek. His mother and Elsie bent over him, murmuring "Poor darling," as women will, having pity and love for even the very naughtiest of babies, and Aunt Hannah said, half under her breath: "Poor little victim."

Jane came and carried him upstairs to bed, Aunt Hannah following, ostensibly to make sure

that all went on right, but truly to surreptitiously hold her treasure in her arms a few minutes and murmur a lullaby over him, although he was already far away in the confines of that beautiful realm where babies go when they sleep; but it was a delight to hold his round cheek to hers, whisper "Dear little lamb," and sing a prayer over him which if translated into words would have been fragrant with love and high aspirations.

Mrs. Remington and Elsie returned to the parlor, and the latter, dropping into a low seat near the glowing grate, exclaimed:

"This is an ideal home. Such lovely rooms, in exquisite taste and harmony, with not a single gaudy effect! Mrs. Remington, do you know you have everything that is worth having in this world, and the blessing of the other one besides? Let me see," she added, with a reflective air. "There is dear Aunt Hannah, just as good as having a grandmother in the house, and little John, the beauty, prince of babies, and your husband, best and noblest of men."

"You forget one thing," Mrs. Remington answered smiling; "I have not much money."

"You have all that is necessary. Plenty for your own needs and quantities to give away, apparently. Is not that enough?"

"I am content, but many people, knowing of our small income, would smile at the idea of envying me."

"What is money compared with a happy home?" the girl said wistfully. "Mine was not always happy, and I have never known but a few that were, even in my short life. Oh! there is so much wretchedness in the world. It impresses me more because I have been to the penitentiary to-day, where I have been singing to the women after Fern spoke to them, and their faces haunt me. Poor creatures! How they hang upon her words! And no wonder; such tenderness, such love as shines in her face and speaks in her soft tones! And what she says is exactly enough and no more. She does not preach to them and make them feel that she is a glorious angel away up on a high cloud, and they can't touch her. When she says 'friends,' or 'sisters,' in that inimitable voice of hers, I know they feel like worshiping her. Fern is so happy these days that her face is aglow all the time. She looks more as if she belonged to earth than she did."

"And yet," said Mrs. Remington, "it must be a trial to both of them to postpone their marriage and be separated so soon again, after enduring all they have."

"Yes, but it seemed necessary. Dr. Fletcher was pledged to return for a few months. He pleaded hard to take Fern with him, but she had also made many engagements to speak in various places; besides, her mother is too delicate to be left. They were both so delighted to

find each other free that they can live upon that for a time."

"I was in at Mrs. King's this morning," Mrs. Remington said. "She had just received a letter from her husband, and is quite hopeful over him. She said lovely things about you, but take care, Elsie, that you don't make Carroll break one of the commandments. You are certainly an object of adoration to him. His mother says he is never tired of sounding your praises. You are to him the embodiment of all that is beautiful and wise and good. You certainly have done wonders for both of them. Mrs. King says the house is always filled with sunshine when you come, and that it warms and cheers even her sad heart. This little private mission of yours is a great success, and you deserve credit for tact and self-denial."

"Not a bit of credit," exclaimed Elsie; "it is half of it pure selfishness. I love the little fellow, and have to go to see him and carry him things; it gives me pleasure. And I admire his mother, too; she is a fine, strong character. How brave and sweet she is! I should just fall down in a wilted heap if such trials were put upon me, I fear."

"No, you would not, dear; do not underrate yourself. Great trials did befall you — one of them the keenest that can come to a girl — and you bore them with remarkable fortitude. It takes courage of the highest type to do what you did —

give up one for conscience' sake who was linked with the dearest plans a woman can have on earth, and come out of it all not soured and gloomy for life, as many do."

Elsie was silent a moment, looking into the fire; then she said slowly:

"Mrs. Remington, I ought to undeceive you. You give me far too much credit. Breaking my engagement with Aleck Palmer did not break my heart, as you supposed. It is true I was deeply attached to him for a time, and when my eyes were first opened to the worldly sort of life I was leading, and when I realized the horrors of the liquor traffic, it troubled me greatly that he was not of the same mind. But after I discovered that he derived part of his income from that source, and that he had deceived me about that and other things, telling absolute untruths, and when he attempted to tyrannize, actually commanding me to give up the little temperance work I was doing, then I saw that we scarcely had one sympathy in common, and suddenly one day all the love I had ever felt for him went, and I never could get it back. I was in deep trouble though, because it is humiliating to have your affairs on every person's tongue, and because my father was displeased with me. Aleck Palmer is rich and highly connected, and father liked him besides; he was greatly disappointed. But I have no regrets on my own account. As the months went on I was

exceedingly glad of my freedom. So you can consider me heart-whole, and not a martyr for the truth's sake, as it turns out."

"Is that so?" Mrs. Remington exclaimed, with delighted eyes; "how happy I am to know it! I feared your life was clouded by the affair. At the same time I was glad when it was broken off, because my intuitions told me he was not the one for you. But Mr. Palmer, what of him?"

"He is more than consoled. He went to Europe, and married a lady who is royally connected and holds vast estates in her own right. Mrs. Remington, some of my friends think I did very wrong in breaking such a promise. But the promise was made to the type of man I supposed him to be, which he was not. Must not a wife reverence her husband?"

"The Bible says so."

"Then he must have qualities to command reverence, or she must fancy he has, at least. Fancy deserted me, and left the bare truth standing out."

"You are right, of course. A love based upon anything else than noble character will not endure. But, dear, is there no one on all the wide earth that you think you could reverence in that way?" Mrs. Remington asked, looking straight into the blue eyes which dropped their gaze into the fire as Elsie answered demurely:

"Yes, just one; but I'll not tell you who it is, and he himself will never find it out."

The carriage coming for Elsie just then put an end to further confidences.

Mrs. Remington went up to find Aunt Hannah, who was watching her idol's slumbers.

"Now, doesn't he look like a saint who was never naughty in all his life?" the young mother said, bending over where he lay amidst the soft whiteness of his crib, serene and sweet, with one hand under his rosy cheek; then without waiting for reply:

"Aunt Hannah, I want to call you to account. Why, when you stood looking at Baby in the dining-room, did you call him 'little victim'?"

"All children are more or less, at times, victims of their parents' thoughtlessness or inexperience," declared Aunt Hannah, almost grimly.

"Why, Auntie dear, I thought you were a famous disciplinarian. Did you disapprove of John's correcting Baby at the table? You said the other day I was a brave mother because I would not yield until I had conquered him, though it took me an hour and nearly broke my heart, the day he was determined to have my best fan to play with, you know."

"Yes, you couldn't do anything else. You told him not to touch the fan, and he kept taking it up again, though he knows perfectly what 'No' means. He must learn to obey."

"Now, sit down here, Aunt Hannah, and explain all about it. Give me a nice, good lecture on dis-

cipline ; I need it. I feel utterly helpless and perplexed sometimes before that small bit of humanity. What was wrong to-night ? "

" Child, I ought not to have said it, maybe ; I always did disapprove of a meddler in a family. There is a deal of unhappiness made in that way. But I will just tell you what I meant to-night. Of course the little fellow can't have a thing because he cries for it, and he can't have what is not good for him, any way. He had to be corrected. I think the wrong was in bringing him to the table at all at night. He ought to have his bread and milk at five o'clock, and be put to bed by another hour. After he has studied and planned so much mischief, and his little feet have trudged all day to carry out his plans, he is tired. He feels as we do when we are all tuckered out and call ourselves nervous. We are as ready again to cry or fall into a fit of temper as when we are fresh. Then comes something on the table that he likes and can't have. He does not see why he can't. He is wonderfully tempted. His heart feels fit to break, and he is angry besides. If the Lord taught us grown-up folks to pray ' Lead us not into temptation,' shouldn't we see to it that we don't tempt poor babies beyond what they can bear ? "

" Yes, I see," his mother answered, meekly. " I wish I knew just how to manage him in all things."

" Well, I don't feel as if I had divine wisdom on

the subject by any means," Aunt Hannah said. "I never brought up any child but John. He had a big will, and I had many a tussle before he learned to know that he had to give it up sometimes, but, if I could help it, I never had a settlement with him at meal-time. I would sooner let a child go without his dinner another hour than to have a crying spell in the midst of it. You know how it is yourself, when you've had a lump in your throat and feel bad. You don't want to eat; if you do, it lies there like a cannon-ball and makes you feel miserable. Children with cross mothers are made into dyspeptics, I daresay, by eating when they are all stirred up."

"I never thought of it in that way," Mrs. Remington said. "It is reasonable, and it is true that children are victims to thoughtlessness. How would it do to have Baby take all his meals alone till he is a little older? It is quite trying to correct him so much at the table. I know I always feel as if I could not eat a mouthful while he is crying."

"I don't think that would do at all. The little fellow would be lonesome, and so would we. How would he ever learn to behave at the table if you don't begin with him when he is young? Suppose you let him come to breakfast, and what you call lunch. If you have noticed, he is more easily controlled then than he is at night. He doesn't set up his will so strong when he isn't tired. Then,

if he misbehaves, let Jane come and carry him off and not bring him back to that meal. It isn't like being posted up there, a little sinner with us all looking at him. Afterward you can talk with him about it, and tell him he can never stay at the table when he is naughty. An ounce of prevention is worth a good deal, too. Impress it upon him just before he goes to the table that he must be good."

"Why, Aunt Hannah, we thought it would help him learn — to keep him in the room and let him feel that he is disgraced."

"But has it helped? He has cried in that corner for six weeks now. He knows he can come back to the table as soon as he says, 'I will be dood,' and sometimes his big will won't let him say it for ever so long. But let him see that there is no more coming back for that meal and my young man will change his course. I would rather go to the stake myself than hear his sobs, that sound as if his poor little heart was breaking."

"He will cry all the same if Jane takes him away, don't you think?"

"No, he won't cry a second. His mind will be turned to something else on the way out."

"I wonder," the young mother said, as she sighed, "whether there ever before was such a mischievous baby as ours."

"Yes," answered Aunt Hannah decidedly, "lots of 'em. His father before him was, and I shouldn't

a bit wonder if you were good at it yourself. It is only babies made of putty that are always saintly. Besides, we must remember that a good deal of what we call mischief, isn't at all. It is exploring and experimenting. How else are little scraps of men and women to learn all they have to learn?"

"Aunt Hannah, it is your bedtime, and I am keeping you. You almost nodded then. Don't wait another moment. John will soon be here, I am sure. He did not expect to be gone as long as this."

Three hours later, when the clock chimed out the midnight hour, Mrs. Remington stood shivering by the old lady's bedside, saying:

"O, Aunt Hannah! it is twelve o'clock and John has not come yet. I am so troubled I cannot sleep."

CHAPTER XI.

"NO!"

MR. REMINGTON, once launched on a text, gave himself no concern as to his route. He became absorbed in sounding the depths of the wonderful passage he had chosen. After the topic and divisions of his sermon became clearly defined, he recalled himself to material things and reflected that he had been a considerable time on the way. He looked from the window to try to discover his whereabouts. To his surprise, street lamps had disappeared. He was out in the open country and the night was dark. He called to the driver:

"Where are you taking me to? Have you not got out of your way?"

The man told him gruffly that it was "a ways out" and a half-mile farther. It looked dubious, but Mr. Remington told himself that it was all right; probably a farmer living out a few miles had sent for him.

Presently the carriage stopped, but he could see no house in sight. Perhaps it was hidden by

trees. The driver got down and silently opened the door.

Mr. Remington stepped out, asking, "Which way?"

"Follow me," the fellow said, as he tied his horses to a tree. They passed through a bit of wood and came out on the river bank. A light-house on the distant opposite shore revealed dark waters, and yet there was no dwelling to be seen. But the forms of two or three men dimly outlined became visible.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Remington. "Where is the man who wished to see me?"

"Here he is. We all want to see you," a mocking voice replied.

At this the others set up a coarse laugh.

"There's no use in mincing matters, Parson," the heavy voice continued, "so we'll come right down to business. You are in for it now, sure. We've brought you here to have a settlement. You've got to promise to back down and let us alone or you'll have to face the music."

Then he went on to say, interspersed with many oaths, that the saloon just closed was to be re-opened; that they meant to have one there in spite of anybody. If he chose to let them alone, well and good; he should not be molested. If he would promise that, then and there, swear it, then he should be driven back to his home at once. If not, then prepare himself for the worst.

Almost as soon as he stepped from the carriage, Mr. Remington felt suspicious that some plot against him was on foot. Rapidly he reviewed the situation. He was several miles from the city, in the hands of a band of lawless men. The hour was not late, but the locality was lonely, being quite a distance from the highway. If he should shout for help it would be of no avail; it might perhaps hasten a catastrophe. There was absolutely nothing that could be done by him in the way of defense. Suddenly there came to his senses a realization of the near presence of Christ. He almost looked to see among the dark figures about him, a shining One; "the form of the fourth." It instantly calmed his heart and cleared his brain, enabling him to speak to them with coolness and dignity. He began to try to reason with them. They were evidently astonished at his courage, but one might as well reason with wild beasts. They hissed and hooted, drowning his voice, and the spokesman cried with an oath:

"That won't do, Parson; we don't want any preach! Will you swear to let us alone and stop your temperance gabble? That's the question. Say 'yes,' and you can go home. Say 'no,' and you shall be ducked in the river till you come to your senses."

"No!" and Mr. Remington's voice rang out clear and firm.

"Nab him, Bill," roared the leader. "Bring

him along. It won't be hard work to duck him, he ain't very hefty."

Two of the men had gone down to the river to find a suitable place for carrying out their demoniacal plans, after seeing that their victim intended to submit peaceably, leaving the other two with the prisoner. One of these was undoing a rope or strap, while the other clutched the prisoner's arm with a firm grasp.

"Stand aside!" Mr. Remington said. "Let me take off my overcoat." There was so much authority in the tone that the fellow involuntarily loosened his grasp and stepped back. The next instant the coat was handed over to him, and like a flash Mr. Remington turned, vanished into the darkness and ran like the wind. Shots were discharged, balls whizzed by him, but like a hero of old in the hands of his enemies, "no manner of hurt was found upon him."

In college days Mr. Remington had been somewhat of an athlete. His classmates called him the champion runner. The long unused accomplishment — that peculiar, swift gliding over the ground which can only be attained by training — served him now to good purpose, as the lithe form, now that he was out of the woods and could see the way clearly, ran fleetly, noiselessly, on over fields, leaping lightly over fences, on toward a point he had in mind, far from the main road, as nearly as he could judge his whereabouts.

On went the fugitive, never slacking his speed until, after having gone a long distance, a light glimmered at the foot of a hill. But when he neared the house it proved to be not much more than a hut. He dared not stop there. Possibly it was the very den where the ruffians lived. Another two miles of rapid walking, and then, just as he began to feel utterly worn out, he came upon a substantial-looking country house.

The lights were out, but he ventured to knock at the door, which, after a little, was opened by a man with a lighted candle in his hand. who demanded in a gruff tone :

" Well, who are you and what do you want this time of night ? "

" Is it possible I have struck one of the rascals here ? " was the tired intruder's mental comment as he ventured to briefly tell why he was there.

It was not the first time that Mr. Remington's voice had been his passport — clear, manly, with that unmistakable ring of sincerity which begets confidence. There was, too, an indefinable manner of speech which bespoke the educated gentleman.

Farmer Morgan, as he stood there winking and blinking in the light of his tallow candle, his gray locks straggling from under his red nightcap, was ashamed of himself with the first words the stranger uttered. He was a good man and kindly, but cross at having his first sleep disturbed.

"Come in, come in!" he said the next minute. "Bless me! and you are a preacher, too, aren't you? The rascals! They ought to be hung! I vum! I'll take my old gun and go after them," he declared in excitement.

But Mr. Remington assured him it would be of no avail, as they were far out of his reach by this time.

"Well, wife," he called, "let's stir round and get this man something to eat. He's had a five-mile run."

Good Mrs. Morgan made a cup of tea and brought out substantial stores, to which the traveler did ample justice.

While so engaged his host insisted on hearing the whole story repeated, clapping his hands and hurrahing when he got to the point of escape.

"I'm glad," he declared, "to have those scoundrels of saloon-keepers come up with, and I'm mighty glad that somebody had grit enough to make a row with 'em. Why, that's the reason I don't move into town. It makes me blazing mad to see a saloon on every corner. I can't stand it, and I won't!

"Well, now, you're a good piece from home, Doctor," he went on, as they rose from the table; "stay to-night with us — the piece that's left of it; get a good sleep, and in the morning I'll take you home."

"There is only one thing in the way of that

pleasant arrangement," Mr. Remington answered. "I have a little wife at home who will start the police out searching for me if I do. I really must go and relieve her anxieties. If you will kindly lend me a horse, I will return him in the morning."

"I sha'n't do any such thing," the old farmer said. "If you're going to-night, I'll take you, and my gun'll go along, too. I'm not going to have you gobbled up again."

So he harnessed his swiftest horse, insisted on the minister's getting into an overcoat that was much too large for him, tucked him up with blankets and robes, and they were soon on the way.

When they arrived and Mr. Remington was saying his good-by and thanks, Farmer Morgan fumbled in his pocket-book and brought out bills to the amount of twenty-five dollars.

"Here's a little something," he said, "to help fight 'em. Go ahead, and God bless you."

As the clock on the church tower struck two, the minister entered his door again. The house was lighted and his wife and Aunt Hannah in waiting.

"What! still up!" he exclaimed. "I thought I should find you wrapped in slumber."

"As if we could sleep when you were away, no one knew in what peril," his wife said, in a voice that almost trembled in tears, so great had been the tension upon her nerves.

"Dear womankind," he answered; "she always

fancies that waking and watching and afflicting her soul will avert the evil and bring back the lost one if only she steadfastly watch. It was my sole consolation to hope that perhaps you both had gone to bed and to sleep and knew nothing of my absence."

His attempt to make light of the whole thing and evade inquiries, for the present at least, was unsuccessful. They would not rest till they had heard a particular account of the night's doings.

"But I am through it unharmed, with no loss except my dignity and my overcoat. I had to laugh to myself as I went, at the ludicrous figure I must have cut streaking it over the fields and flying over fences, had it been light enough to see. As for the overcoat, I hated to sacrifice it, but I could not think of any other way to get off. It may prove to be a clue to the miscreants, though."

"Don't speak of the overcoat, dear," his wife said, still trembling with excitement. "It was a small price to pay for your liberty."

"Remember it was a new one," laughed her husband, "and a particularly nice one. I begin to feel regrets like an avalanche coming over me. I shall probably never see it again."

"O, don't! How can you make light of what you have passed through? It is fearful! horrible! To think those wretches were going to plunge you into the water; a winter night, too!" and she shuddered again.

Aunt Hannah, divining her nephew's attempt to lighten the strain on his wife's nerves by diverting her mind, joined him and remarked :

"You see, Martha doesn't feel about the loss of your coat as the woman did about her bag."

"How was that, Aunt Hannah ?"

"Why, her husband, on his way to take his grist to mill, was drowned, and when the news was brought his wife, she only said : 'Then that new bag has gone down, too. That's just my luck !'"

Even Mrs. Remington had to laugh at that, through tears, and Aunt Hannah said :

"Come, John, you have had two rides and two suppers and a race this night. The next thing in order is some sleep, so I will bid you good-night."

"Yes, you must sleep, dear," his wife said, clasping him close when they were left alone. "As for me, I feel as if I must stay awake and thank God for your deliverance."

The next morning Mr. Remington sought out Earle Mason to consult with him as to the plan of procedure for the apprehension of the villains who had assaulted him. They decided to place the matter in the hands of a detective, and meanwhile be on the watch for developments.

Mr. Mason asked for a particular description of the overcoat, which Mr. Remington essayed to give, but, abandoning the idea in despair, referred him to his wife, "who knows to an iota exactly what and how it is."

"Black beaver cloth," she answered promptly, "quite heavy, lined with silk serge ; sleeve linings are black and white silk. The collar is of velvet, and I worked my husband's initials in red silk in the right-hand sleeve lining, because the clothes of you men are so much alike, you are always making off with one another's hats and coats."

It was the same week that Earle Mason, following his usual habit of giving one hour a day to Christian work, took his way among the slums of Water Street to visit a little boy who had been absent from the mission Sabbath-school several times.

Turning into an alley he went up a steep flight of stairs, then through a dark passage and knocked at a door. It was opened by the little boy he had come in search of. The child said his mother had gone out to be gone till night, leaving him in care of a younger brother, not much more than a baby.

While Mr. Mason sat talking with little Tim in his pleasant way, his eyes, roving about the room, chanced to fall upon a coat hanging on the wall.

Tim's mother took great pride in that coat, and had that very afternoon rescued it from the rough box where her husband had thrust it. She believed, as he had told her, that it was a present from his employer, so she brushed it and hung it up, "like any other gentleman's coat," she told herself with great satisfaction.

The description given of Mr. Remington's coat

came at once to Mr. Mason's mind. As nearly as he could judge a few feet away, this one corresponded with the description. He would like to examine it near by and hit upon a method. Taking a dime from his pocket, he said to Tim :

"Would you like to go down to the grocery around the corner and buy some candy for you and your little brother, and I will stay with him till you come back?"

Tim would. He promised to be right back, and was gone in a twinkling.

Then Mr. Mason walked over to the coat and eagerly inspected it. Sure enough, it was beaver cloth ; it had a velvet collar ; its sleeve linings were of black and white silk, and near the bottom of the sleeve were three small red letters, J. S. R.

Mr. Mason hastened away with all speed as soon as the child returned, and dispatched a detective to the house, who secured not only the coat, but little Tim's father as well.

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE JOHN.

AT the time of the temperance mass-meeting in the autumn there were certain evil men, minions of the rum power, who vowed that night to "watch out" and find opportunity, if possible, to have revenge on every person who spoke on that occasion.

Of late a feeling of intensest hate had been brewing toward the few dauntless spirits in that city who had dared day by day to fling out their colors and sound the war-cry against the liquor traffic.

Maddened by recent events, the loss of the saloon case and the failure of their plans to bring the heroic minister to terms, they grew desperate, especially as one of their number, Bill Wicks, the man in whose possession the overcoat was found, now lay in jail awaiting his trial.

Mr. Remington proved to be the person to whom their fury was especially directed, and it was not strange — the one who had been active in prosecuting the saloon, who wrote stirring anti-

saloon articles for the daily papers, and used an unusually eloquent tongue whenever and wherever he found opportunity to stir up public sentiment against the rum power.

There were other offenses as well. John Remington was no "temperance man — but"; moderate, temporizing and pacificatory. He was heart and soul committed to wage a war for "God and home and native land" against this diabolical enemy. He surged with indignation; he glowed with enthusiasm; he imparted it to others, and wielded a strong influence over young men.

He also carefully watched over the boys of his congregation, forming them into a loyal legion, and infusing into them temperance principles so stanch that not one could be coaxed or hired to enter the saloon. And now, a strong band, they were reaching out and drawing in other boys who were under no good influences whatever, and who were attracted and held in the society at first by the ingenious devices of their leader to make it the most fascinating place that could be found in which to spend an hour, and afterward, if they did not become enthusiasts in working for the cause, they remained because they enjoyed the meetings and loved the leader. So this society was a great blow to the interests of the saloon-keeper who had, as it turned out, small material to work upon in the initiatory steps necessary to make drunkards, and he was incensed accordingly. The situation

was discouraging, with few if any boys hanging about the door to whom he might toss a handful of brandy drops, or pass over the dregs of the glasses for them to drain, or even on occasion treat to a mild decoction of whiskey (mostly water and sugar).

How, with such a state of things, could the prophecy of the old rhyme ever be fulfilled?

> "The drunkards all will never be dead,
> I'll tell you the reason why:
> The young ones they grow up
> Before the old ones die."

The suburb of Greenhurst, where Mr. Remington lived, was but two or three miles from the city proper. The walks between were good in good weather, and that was during much of the winter, for this was in a latitude where snow seldom came, and did not remain long at any time.

Baby John was taken out daily by his young nurse, who was devoted to him, and in whom Mrs. Remington had much confidence.

One bright morning, as she trundled the little equipage down the streets, more than one person turned as they passed for another look at the beautiful child. He wore a blue plush coat and a cunning little Scotch cap of soft, white wool, with short yellow curls about his head like a halo. The white fur robe contrasting with the blue coat and pink mittens made a bright bit of color on the

wintry air. The soft bloom of health was on his cheek, and his blue eyes grew bluer and darker, dancing with delight as, in the gayest of spirits, he told how the cow mooed, how sheep baaed, how doves said "Coo, coo," and babies cried "Wah, wah," and then made a kitty mew in all notes of the scale.

It was a warm, sunny day for the time of year, and two disreputable-looking men who were hanging about their much-loved haunt, the saloon which had just been re-opened, were sprawled on a bench outside the door sunning themselves after the manner of all reptiles. The baby's gleeful laugh attracted their attention as Jane drew the carriage slowly by, herself intent only on enjoying his happiness.

One of the men got up and sauntered to the side of the carriage, and Jane, always proud of her charge, and only too happy to show him off on all occasions, halted a moment.

"Look here, Jim," said the man, and Jim got up and shambled over.

Baby John was no aristocrat. He smiled sweetly on the rough fellows and began again to go through his little répertoire of mimicries, at which they burst into laughter so boisterous that Baby was frightened.

"He's a cute chap," said one, and the other asked:

"Whose kid is he?"

"He's Mr. Remington's little boy," Jane answered, with some dignity.

"Oh! the parson's, eh?" and his face darkened. "D'ye hear that, Jim?"

The nurse hurried on, for she smelled the fumes of whiskey, and inwardly resolved not to walk on that side of the street again.

That same night two men stood in one of the alleys of what might be called the sediment of the city. The gaslight at the corner sent occasional flickerings into their faces as they talked together in low mutterings. Did one ask the other how it fared with him in the ups and downs of the way, and bid him in the name of God take courage and press on? Or was it earnest warning and entreaty to seek a new life which he whispered in his ear? But such words are not spoken in secrecy at the dead of night in back alleys and haunts of wickedness. This fiend in the shape of a man had a far different communication; he was divulging to the other a plan how they might wreak vengeance on the head of a good man whose only crime had been a brave attempt to make them and the world better.

It was about a week after this that little John had an unusually long outing.

Jane liked best to walk out toward the country, where the houses were set in wide lawns with grand old trees; it reminded her of her native land. It was drawing near to spring, and the sun's rays were warm and fell full in little John's

face, causing drowsiness after the long ride; so he lay back among his cushions, the long lashes drooped on his cheeks, and he was fast asleep.

As the nurse turned about to go home, she was seized with a sudden thirst. They were just in front of a large house, and a pleasant-looking girl stood in the kitchen door.

"Now, what harm would it be," thought Jane, "to leave little John here while I get a drink of water?"

So she brought the carriage inside the wide gateway close by the hedge where it was screened from the street, carefully steadied the wheels against a tree so that he could not possibly tip over, and ran quickly up the walk.

There was delay in getting the water. The pump was out of order and had to be primed. Then the girls recognized each other as being natives of dear old England, and several minutes flew by while they asked and answered questions, each delighted to find the other. But Jane, presently remembering her charge with a twinge of conscience, fairly flew back to the gate.

What was her horror to find the carriage empty! She rushed out to the street, thinking that perhaps little John had awakened and climbed out, but nobody was to be seen either way, and there was no other place to look for him, as this house stood quite by itself.

"Oh! maybe he is in here," the distracted girl

exclaimed, darting in and out between the shrubbery, and calling "Baby! Baby! little John! Oh! where are you?"

Coming back, she stood and gazed in a dazed way at the empty carriage; then, noticing for the first time that the cushion and fur robe were gone too, screamed out:

"Oh! somebody has carried him off. What shall I do? You ask your missus to help me, won't you?"

But the girl said her mistress was down town, adding: "There's nobody about the place but me."

"I can never go home without him!" Jane declared, but nevertheless she took hold of the carriage and started, sobbing as she went; then, realizing the need of haste, started into a wild run, never slacking her speed till she reached home.

Mrs. Remington was in her room, engaged in making a dainty dress for little John, and Elsie Chilton had dropped in for a morning call. Elsie happened to glance out the window just as Jane appeared.

"Why," she exclaimed, "here comes Baby's nurse, but he is not in the carriage!" Then, knowing from the girl's appearance that something must have happened, rushed from the room and ran downstairs, Mrs. Remington following.

Jane looked up into her face, and was dumb with grief and fear.

"Where is he? Speak quickly; tell me! What has happened to Baby?" the mother cried with white lips, as an awful pang went through her heart at sight of the empty carriage.

They managed to make out the terrible truth at last, told incoherently with wild sobbing. Then both stood appalled before the fact that Baby's father had gone to attend a funeral, and would not be at home for two or three hours.

Mrs. Remington seized her hat and cloak, with but one thought in her mind, to go to the spot where her darling was last seen. But her limbs refused to bear her, and she sank down limp and white-faced on the doorstep. Elsie called Aunt Hannah to care for her, then said hurriedly:

"I will go; I will get others to help me. We will find him, dear Mrs. Remington," and sped away as fast as feet could move, half-dragging the nurse after her.

And now Elsie Chilton, unaccustomed to responsibility or to emergencies which called for prompt, wise action, suddenly found herself the one person upon whom much depended. Instead of rushing aimlessly about in a distracted way, she coolly made her plans and rapidly carried them out, and that, because she knew how to send a swift communication, swifter than telegraphy, to One who flashes back in the twinkling of an eye the right word or thought or deed to the waiting soul down here in the dark.

Elsie went first of all to the nearest police station and enlisted their aid, securing a detective to accompany them to the place where the child had disappeared. She had strong hopes that he would be easily found; perhaps some motherly woman had taken him into her house a few minutes to enjoy his prattle. But when she reached the place and saw only the large house in the midst of extensive grounds and quite a distance from other dwellings, her heart sank. They went into the house, and searched the grounds, then visited all the houses in that vicinity, with no result. No one had seen a child of that description.

The terrible certainty began to force itself upon Elsie that dear little John had been stolen. Taking a carriage, she went with the detective to the nearest railroad stations. She sat in crowded waiting-rooms and eagerly watched every person who entered, penetrating even into the smoky atmosphere of the men's room. She watched the crowds pour out and enter the trains; then, to be doubly sure, went through the cars herself.

It was all in vain. There were babies of all ages and sizes, but not the golden-haired, dimpled darling she was in search of.

In despair, she bethought herself of one who would be keenly alive to the situation, and she hastened to Earle Mason's office. A few hours ago she could scarcely have conceived of anything which would have induced her to call upon him

there, but this was no time for strict observance of society rules.

Mr. Mason had a knotty point in a case to unravel that morning, and having been hindered several times by long calls from importunate clients, had given orders that he should not be disturbed for any cause during the rest of the morning. It was therefore with annoyance and surprise that he looked up at the sound of the opening door to see his office boy standing there with an apologetic look on his face and a lady's card in his hand.

"I couldn't help it, sir," he said, as he handed the card to his superior. "She wouldn't go away. She said she must see you right away."

Mr. Mason took the card and glanced at the name; then his face lighted up, and he arose hastily, saying:

"I will see her."

His expression changed to grave concern as soon as he saw Elsie. Evidently she was deeply troubled.

"O, Mr. Mason!" she exclaimed, in an eager, trembling voice, "little John is lost. I am sure you will know what to do," and then she rapidly told all that had happened.

But his face grew more anxious than her own as he listened, and realized all that evil men had it in their power to accomplish either for revenge or gain, hidden as they were in the great city.

Giving his affairs into the hands of a brother lawyer, he went with Elsie back to the Remingtons to see if the child had not already been found, but nothing had yet been heard, and he hurried away to secure a large force of detectives of undoubted skill, and to carry on the search himself — eagerly, unwearyingly.

There were many among the lowly who loved the very name of this young man. He was to them all that stood for goodness, truth and beneficence. So now he went from one place to another, into cellars and attics, holding conferences with washer-women over their tubs; penetrating into the smoke and clatter of machine shops and factories; and interviewing grimy men to see if they had heard dropped any word that could possibly point to any clue. Mr. Hargrave joined him later in the day, and together — the experienced, wise man of business and the keen-witted young lawyer — gave the best that was in them of intense thought and unfailing effort toward solving the awful problem. They devised new plans and offered large rewards for the return of the child. Indeed, before many hours the whole church was enlisted, besides many members of Mr. Remington's former charge in the city. The excitement grew to be intense as night settled down, and no tidings — not even the least clue — had been obtained.

Mr. Remington when he returned and the fear-

ful news was made known, sat for a moment as if turned to stone. Then he got up, went to his study, locked the door, and carried on the conflict of his soul with none but God to see. Before he left it he laid his only darling son by faith in the very arms of the prayer-hearing God, and came forth calmed, ready to sustain others and to join in the search.

It was a night of horror, though, to all, even with divine help to bear the strain. Had it not been for that help they must have lost their reason.

It was so torturing to see Baby's little chair and playthings dropped where he left them. There, too, was the empty crib and the white flannel gown hanging near it, the sleeves rounded out to the shape of the plump little arms. Where was the dear baby? Did he sleep on a pile of filthy rags, in some vile den, watched over by some miserable hag? And was he at that moment crying piteously and calling "Mamma," or "Gamma," as he called Aunt Hannah? Or was he living at all? It would be almost a relief from this cruel suspense to know that he was safe in the arms of the tender Shepherd.

The long night passed heavily away, especially to those who sat at home waiting for tidings. Mr. Remington joined those who spent the night in searching the city. Many others went to the suburbs and neighboring towns. Aunt Hannah

fled to her stronghold, literally praying through all the dark hours, sometimes encouraging the heart of the stricken mother with a promise from God's Book, sometimes for her comfort audibly speaking words of prayer ; importunate pleadings, strong in faith.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LITTLE TRAVELER.

MORNING dawned on haggard faces and torn hearts, and yet there was no hope. Must the years stretch out before them filled with gloom and horror, unsatisfied longing and fruitless searching? For if their darling were not returned to them, life must henceforth be one long search.

The young mother lay for hours like one stunned by a terrible physical blow, able only to take in the fearful thought: "My baby is lost!"

When she roused herself and moved about, wan and white, she came upon Jane weeping in a dark corner of the back hall. The girl, by a finer instinct than one might have given her credit for, feeling that the sight of herself would be painful to her mistress, had kept out of the way, and she started up now like a culprit to flee; but Mrs. Remington stopped her, laid a kindly hand upon her shoulder, and, in a gentle voice, assured her that she believed she had not intended to do wrong, then sent her upon some small errand.

It was an act never forgotten by the girl, and

which led her years afterward to declare her mistress to be "just an angel of a woman." In truth, however, Mrs. Remington was no more angelic than the rest of us. The sight of Jane made her inwardly shudder at first, and for a moment she felt like telling her to go at once and never let herself be seen in that house again. But this child of God had long ago surrendered her will to him, and now, though her feelings rebelled, she met their every complaint and resistance with the words, "Thy will be done," saying them over and over to herself at every new suggestion of the tempter. He had steadfastly attempted to linger near her all through the hours of that dreadful night, and had whispered in her ear: "God loves you, does he? As if he would allow your only child to be taken from you in such a cruel way if he did! You and your husband have tried faithfully to serve the Lord, have been brave and true and self-denying, and this is your reward! He could keep your child safely and send you good news of him this very hour, and he does not do it."

But Satan must have soon slunk away defeated at the sight of that brave little household lifting up their heads in faith, reiterating: "Thy will be done. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

"'Twould be a tall heap o' money that 'ud be paid fer that brat if he should turn up missin' some day; now, wouldn't it, Jim?"

This is what one of the two men in front of the saloon had remarked to the other as they watched little John's carriage out of sight the day Jane had stopped a moment to let them admire the pretty boy.

No sooner had he spoken the words than there shot into his mind a scheme which might not only bring money, but would satisfy revenge as well. Doubtless Satan furnished the hint, for the strangeness of it all is that we may have either aid we apply for; the crafty suggestions of the prince of darkness, or the wisdom that cometh from above.

Pete Nolan got up then and went off by himself to think about it. Jim wasn't worth a cent for head-work. No use talking to him. He must go down town and see Dan Stokes, who was one of the ringleaders in planning bold undertakings; although the crafty fellow managed always to escape the penalty of the law himself; partly owing to the fact that he possessed a low cunning like a serpent, and because he was seldom thoroughly intoxicated, being able to drink quantities without producing that effect.

"Kill two birds with one stone, don't yer see?" chuckled Pete Nolan, after he had presented the daring scheme to his accomplice that same night.

The idea struck Dan Stokes. He reckoned, though, it might be a "tough job," because of the difficulty of accomplishing it without detection.

So it took long plottings in the shadow of the alley to agree upon a plan which might be successfully carried out — a plan to abduct Mr. Remington's child! All preliminaries were finally settled, however, the conference ending with :

"And hark ye, Pete! Keep yer mouth shut. You don't want to blab this out. Don't tell anybody but your old woman. She'll have to help."

The plan was to steal the little one when he was taken out for a ride ; to watch their chances when the nurse should leave his side for a moment ; or, in an unfrequented street, frighten her into giving him up. She could even, if occasion required, be rendered insensible by means of a little chloroform, not enough to do harm, but sufficient to quiet her for a few minutes and prevent outcries.

But where to secrete the child when he should be captured was the question. It would not do to keep him in the city. That would be sure to be searched from end to end. At last Dan Stokes hit upon a method.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed ; "my sister lives way up in the hills, a hundred and fifty miles or so from here or anywhere. She thinks heaps o' me, though I haven't seen her this seven year. We can send the little kid there ; get up a story, you know, that my wife is dead, and will she keep the young one a spell till we send for him? She's a good woman, if she is my sister. Her heart's soft's butter, an' she hain't got any brats of her

own. She'll take him in, an' he'll be as safe as if he was under ground. Nobody on earth would ever think o' lookin' up there for him."

"It's a boss plan!" Pete declared; "but we'll have to disguise him like, before he starts, won't we?"

"'Course! I'll think that all out an' have a mighty pretty job fixed up by mornin'. We'll leave him there long enough to punish his daddy. Then, sez I, we'll bring him back whenever they're ready to down with the dust. Won't we make 'em shell out, though, an' no questions asked? It might be a good idee to keep him up there a year er two. That'll bring down the parson's feathers, you bet!" and the man grinned a demoniacal grin, much as if he were one who had already crossed that "line by us unseen," and must even now be numbered among those for whom there is no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come.

During the next week there might have been seen, at about the same time every morning, a horse and spring-wagon jogging leisurely along the streets of Greenhurst containing a man and woman. They were none other than Pete Nolan and his wife. Pete's bare, bony face had taken on a long iron-gray beard, and unkempt locks of the same hue straggled from under a broad-brimmed old hat. His wife had smoothed her frowzy hair down over her forehead, tied a frilled cap about

her broad face, and over that a large, old-fashioned bonnet, donned an immense pair of spectacles, and wrapped herself in a respectable gray shawl. They were effectually disguised, especially as they were not familiar objects to the better portion of the community, except as Pete lounged in front of the saloon. They looked the quiet, elderly farmer and his wife going in and out of the city carrying produce to market and returning with groceries. A barrel with a few potatoes stood in the wagon behind, and the box was half-full of loose hay. They were well stocked besides with everything that might be necessary in this difficult undertaking. There was a shabby outfit for a baby, and the long pocket of Mrs. Nolan's dress held a bottle of milk, a piece of bread and some sticks of red and white peppermint candy, besides a bottle of paregoric.

On that pleasant morning when last Baby John was taken out, they were following his carriage at some little distance, as they had done for several days. Somehow thus far there never had come a propitious moment for carrying out their purpose. Perhaps Pete's wife could not quite screw her courage up to act in unison with him at just the right point, or she was more cautious than he and held him back. He was just now muttering that he was "'bout tired of this business," when his wife touched his elbow and said :

"Look ! the gal's goin' up to the house."

Then they both looked toward all points of the compass, and seeing no one in sight Pete got out and sneaked in at the gate, watching and listening; but all was quiet. In another moment he had stealthily lifted the sleeping child, laid him on the hay in the wagon, spread an old cloak over him and covered the whole with hay, leaving a small space for air. Then the wagon rattled on toward the city. If the public had been on the lookout, they would have seen nothing in that vehicle to awaken suspicion. Just a plodding old farmer trying to sell a few potatoes, and that innocent-looking hay to bait his horse.

Little John was in the stage of his sleep when it was at the soundest, and did not waken, the motion of the wagon when it started only causing him to sleep the sounder, to the great delight of the wretches who were carrying him off.

They drove with all speed to a freight wharf, and went on board a barge used for carrying commodities to different points on the river. There was a rude sort of cabin, to which the sleeping baby was carried and laid on a bunk. When he stirred as if to awaken, Mrs. Nolan put a few drops of paregoric in his mouth, which he swallowed and slept on. And then, with ingenuity and skill which might have served a better cause, she rapidly carried on the work of transforming the baby. Mrs. Nolan had long ago lost all traces of true womanly character in the hard life she led

with a brute for a husband, but now, as she saw little John, the picture of innocence and beauty, warm and sweet and rosy, with damp rings of yellow hair about his forehead, something of the mother heart stirred within her, and looking stealthily about she stooped and kissed his cheek, and a half-regret stole over her that she had aught to do with this wicked business. But it was too late to back down now. Time was precious, besides.

She hurriedly brought out a basket, and, taking from it a pair of shears, clipped off Baby John's yellow curls. She was half-afraid of the soft, shining things as they fell about him; then, with a decoction from a bottle, she colored the hair that was left to a dull brown. She also rubbed his face and neck and hands with a cloth dipped in a liquid that changed the delicate pink and white skin to a tawny, sallow hue.

The narcotic was taking effect and the child slept heavily, so that Mrs. Nolan had no difficulty in changing his clothes. The pink wool stockings and kid shoes were exchanged for clumsy, streaked socks, with stubbed little leather shoes, and the soft cashmere dress for one of calico. When his disguise was completed by a close-fitting red and black hood, and a shabby brown coat much too large for him, the detective himself might have pushed his way in and compared this child with the description he held — "fair, blue eyes, yellow

curls, dress of blue cashmere and cloak of blue plush" — and have gone his way without suspicion. Even little John's own mother might have passed this swarthy little creature by as he lay in heavy sleep, never dreaming that it was her own darling.

So it came to pass that while Elsie Chilton and the detective were waiting at stations and piers, no attention was paid to a rude barge which sailed from a wharf at the foot of Water Street, and while a large police force searched the city and its surroundings, this craft went quietly on its way till it reached a certain port where Pete Nolan and his wife were to take the cars for the country place among the hills.

The whole thing was well planned. The villain who conceived it had brains keen enough to have held positions of honor requiring unusual executive ability, if only when, as a boy, he stood at the place where two roads meet, some kind hand had turned his course into the right path.

After the effects of the paregoric had worn away, little John awoke from his long sleep and looked about him. The woman who watched, her hard outline somewhat softened by the cap and spectacles, sat still to see what he would do. His new surroundings held his wondering eyes for some minutes, then he softly spoke the word he always did when first he awoke, "Mamma," and after an instant's silence, "Gamma."

Mrs. Nolan now appeared on the scene and bent over him, subduing her harsh voice as much as possible, for she did not wish him to be frightened and make trouble.

"Here's grandma," she said.

Little John opened his eyes wide in astonishment. He knew better. That was no grandma of his, but he was not afraid of strangers, so he beamed upon her with one of his rare smiles. This was a good beginning. She hastened to produce some bread and milk.

But Baby's appetite was not so sharp as usual, partly owing to his unusual treatment, having never before swallowed a drop of paregoric, or even soothing syrup. After a little he began to fret, and call "Mamma" in an imperative tone. Not even the red and white candy mollified him for long, so he was again put to sleep as before. They were a long time on the way, owing to detentions and the slow mode of travel for part of the journey. That day and night and the next day had passed before they reached their destination, the last five miles being by stage.

It was evening when they arrived at Stony Ridge, the veritable little village where Mr. Remington had done some of his best work, and were set down at the house of David Bailey, a respectable mechanic who lived in a small house on the outskirts of the village. Pete staid outside, sending his wife in to leave the baby and the letter

which Dan Stokes had sent. A young girl opened the door at her knock, who said that Mrs. Bailey was "sick a-bed," and couldn't see anybody.

"Well, I can't help that," said Mrs. Nolan; "I brought her brother's baby to her. His wife's dead, an' he wants her to keep it a while. I've done my job, and here's the letter he sent her," whereupon she deposited her burden on a lounge, and departed before the astonished girl could ask a question or make a demur.

Mrs. Bailey was ill of a fever, and on that evening having what her neighbors called an unusually "bad turn." So for some time no attention was paid to the strange bundle which occupied the lounge in the sitting-room. Good old Mrs. Blake, who lived near by and, as must be remembered, was the chief pillar in the old Stony Ridge church, had just come in with a basket of delicacies and comforts for the sick woman, and now stood bending over little John, asking:

"Who in the world is this?"

"Read the letter, won't you, Mrs. Blake," said David Bailey, who was just starting out in anxious haste on an errand, "and see what it's all about. I'm sure I don't understand it."

By the time the contents of the letter were known, little John had awakened, and begun his call: "Mamma, Gamma!" The voice was faint, for he was weak from long fasting and worn out with all he had passed through.

When he saw strangers bending over him again he curled his lip in a grieved way and began to sob, for the little hero would never cry outright so long as he could keep it in.

Fearing that his cries would disturb the sick woman, Mrs. Blake hastily gathered him up in her arms, saying:

"He can't stay here to-night, whosever baby he is. I'll just take him home and take care of him till they know what's what."

She fed him generously with warm bread and milk, which he seemed to relish better than that provided by Mrs. Nolan, and by the time the last mouthful had been swallowed was asleep again, being still drowsy from the effects of the drug.

"Poor little lamb," Mrs. Blake said, as she undressed him and improvised a night-dress, "I ought to give him a good wash, but he is so tired I won't bother him to-night."

In the morning little John having an excellent constitution, was quite himself again. He smiled and chattered and frisked, much to the delight of Mrs. Blake, who had not had a baby in charge for twenty years.

She prepared to give him a morning bath in the old-fashioned way with a quart of water and a "wash-rag," but Baby John rebelled. He kicked and squirmed, and reached out his hands and splashed in the basin, trying hard to put his head in too, with other demonstrations so plain, that

the meaning of them at last dawned upon Mrs. Blake.

"The little soul!" she exclaimed, "he's used to gettin' into a tub, I do believe, an' he shall," whereupon she wrapped him in an old blanket, went to the kitchen, filled a small tub half-full of warm water and plunged him into it.

Little John was in his element. He splashed and shouted and ducked his head under water, coming up dripping like a little bird from its bath; and Mrs. Blake knelt by the tub shaking her sides with laughter, trying to scrub off some of the dirt on his face and hands with her soapy cloth.

"My patience!" she ejaculated, "how it comes off! I've seen dirt before, but nothing like this. Why, we shall have a white baby pretty soon."

"Of all things in the world!" she exclaimed, while she wiped him dry, and saw that the child with a dark, muddy skin and brownish hair had been transformed by his bath into a fair, rosy boy, with golden hair turning itself up into little curls all over his head.

"Is this a miracle?" asked good Mrs. Blake of herself, mystified beyond all conception.

Another thing perplexed her, too, as she dressed him. His garments were all coarse and rough except the little shirt which Mrs. Nolan had decided to leave on him. It was of soft, creamy knitted wool, daintily edged at neck and sleeves, with a tiny blue ribbon run in and tied in a bow.

"Well, that's curious," she reflected, examining it more closely. "And I declare if it isn't exactly like the little shirt I sent Johnnie Remington!"

Mrs. Blake grew excited when she found a letter J on the front of it. "It's the very same shirt!" she exclaimed aloud, while little John looked up at her in wonder.

Several years before, a lady from Boston, spending the summer at Stony Ridge, had taught Mrs. Blake to knit babies' shirts. She was very proud of the accomplishment, and had knitted one with extreme care and worked on it a small J in sampler stitch and sent it to "Johnny," as she called him, at Christmas. And now here it was. Did Mrs. Remington care no more for her gift than to give it away to some poor folks? Her heart swelled with a hurt feeling, but she put it away. There was no time to grieve over it now, Baby must be dressed.

Mrs. Blake eyed with disgust the coarse, shabby clothes that belonged to this stray baby. Then, wrapping him again in a blanket, she went to an old chest, bringing from its depths a bundle. It contained the clothes of a dear little grandchild who had died years ago. She selected from the treasures a red flannel dress and a white apron, some warm little skirts, a pair of red stockings and blue shoes. When Baby was dressed in them, she turned him about to admire and kiss him.

"Nothing in the world so sweet as a clean baby," she told him as she buried her face in his plump neck.

Little John smiled up at her, showing his dimples and white teeth, and then Mrs. Blake noticed a something in the expression which set her off again into exclamations.

"Well, this does beat all," she declared. "This looks like the Remington baby himself. It's that uncommon 'lighting-up' look that he and his father both had when they smiled. What a pretty creature he is! But it's all queer. I don't know what to think;" and Mrs. Blake rocked back and forth with her baby in her arms, absorbed in perplexing thought, till little John, refreshed and soothed, fell into sweet sleep.

She laid him on the bed, tucked him up, and went to the door to answer a knock. It was Mr. Porter, the young minister of the church.

"I am sorry to say there is bad news for you in the morning paper, Mrs. Blake," he said. "Your Mr. Remington is in terrible trouble. He has lost a child. It was stolen day before yesterday and they have no clue to his whereabouts."

Mrs. Blake was horror-struck a moment, then a flash came into her face, and she said: "Come in! come here!" leading the way to the bed. "Look here! That's Mr. Remington's baby, I know it is."

Then she told him all the strange story, and the

two agreed that it certainly seemed as if this child could be none other than the lost one.

David Bailey was then summoned and the whole matter rehearsed to him. He was an honest man, whom they could trust. He disclaimed all knowledge of the child whatever, and said that his wife was too ill to be told anything of the matter ; but the letter was from her rascally brother, who lived here and there and anywhere. They had not heard of him in years. From all the circumstances it looked as if this might be one of his evil tricks, and it was more than likely that this was the lost child.

"It can do no harm at least to telegraph Mr. Remington to come here at once," Mr. Porter said. "I'll go immediately and attend to it."

"No, don't ! I'll go myself and take him," said Mother Blake. "Tell me where 'tis. I'll risk but what I can find the way."

"But if this should not be the child ?"

"He is the child. I'd know that baby among a thousand, and it's just like our Heavenly Father — bless his name — to send him here to me and let me take care of him and carry him home, and I'm going to start this very day."

"I also go with thee," said Mr. Porter.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUSPENSE.

MRS. BLAKE was true to her word, and within two hours from the time when she had reached her decision, she, little John and Mr. Porter were on the train, speeding toward the city. The good woman had been entirely willing to brave the perils of the city alone and unguarded, sure that she and her treasure could find their way somehow to Mr. Remington's; and sure that no one would be likely to molest a woman and a baby.

Mr. Porter did not feel so positive; he reflected that the miscreants who had done so foul a deed as to steal a child, must have had strong reasons for doing so, must have thought that they laid their plans well, and must be on the alert through these first exciting days to see that in no way they miscarried. During the hour in which he was engaged in hastily packing his valise in order that it should be ready if he decided to accompany Mrs. Blake, he revolved in his mind several other plans; one, of course, being to telegraph to Mr. Remington to come on immediately.

This was discarded. In his own bewildered brain the good man felt by no means certain that the fair-haired child who had won Mrs. Blake's heart was John Remington, Jr. To be sure, he had never seen the baby. "And if I had," he murmured, as he nervously opened and shut drawers, and hunted for handkerchiefs and collars and neckties, "I shouldn't know him from any other little chubby face. Mrs. Blake thinks she remembers him! The idea of being able to distinguish one baby from another after an absence of six or eight months! I don't know much about them, but I know they change in a remarkable manner during the first few years of their lives. It seems impossible to believe that the villains who stole the Remington baby made such an egregious blunder as to send him out here, where every man, woman and child loves the ground his father trod on. To be sure the rascals might not have known anything about that. It may be all a wonderful, providential chain of events, but it won't do to send for the father; to raise his hopes to the seventh heaven of bliss, only to dash them to the ground again, perhaps. More than that, he ought not to leave the mother; and the mother ought not to have the strain of travel upon her, with the alternate hopes and fears. No, Mrs. Blake is right; it is best for us to go, and take that baby. If it's all a mistake, why we shall have had a fool's errand, that's all. If it should happen

to be the right baby, that will repay us for all the possible chances of being laughed at for the next ten years to come. We'll go, and I'll telegraph to my friend Dr. Coles to know what Mr. Remington's address is, so there shall be no delay when we get there."

Little John was entirely satisfied with the programme. To be sure he wanted his "mamma" and his "Gamma," and puckered his lip several times that morning and asked for them; but on being assured by Mrs. Blake that he should go a-riding on the cars, and go to "Gamma" and "mamma" just as fast as the iron horse could take him, he concluded to be reasonable, and rub the cat's fur the wrong way, and frolic with the dog in a manner which would have brought terror to his mother's heart, could she have seen him.

A queer little chap he was when ready for his journey. Good Mother Blake's baby wardrobe, so carefully laid aside, was neat and clean and wholesome in every respect, but not of the very finest material, nor in the extreme of the fashion, as Mrs. Remington and Elsie Chilton between them had contrived to keep John Junior all his little life. On this particular morning his long gray cloak was too large in the neck for him, and bunched out in the back in a way which would have distressed his mother; and the queer little cap, with blue ribbons tied under his chin, was too small for his splendid head.

Little did John Shield Remington care for trifles like these. When the train was fairly under way he was in a glow of delight. He went through with all the pretty things he had ever been taught in his life. He "mooed" like the cow, he barked like the "bow-wow," mewed like the kitten, and even mimicked the screech of the engine successfully, to the great delight and appreciation of his fellow passengers.

"He's a wonderfully winning child," said Mr. Porter, "whether he's Remington's boy or not."

"Now you needn't say that," said Mrs. Blake; "I know, just as well as I know that I am sitting here, that this is Johnny Remington. He's got his father's eyes. Do you suppose I could be mistaken in those eyes? The idea of such a child as this being the son of that worthless fellow! Why, Mr. Bailey says they haven't had a line from him for seven years, and the most comfort they had out of him in their lives, any way, was not to hear from him at all. He's a drinking, thieving wretch, Mr. Porter; and worse than that, if there is any worse. Don't tell me that this child ever belonged to him! Why, the very way in which he uses his pretty hands shows that he has been brought up among refined people, and taken care of all his life. You ought to have seen him when I plumped him into a bath. I wasn't going to do it, you know. I saw he needed washing badly enough, but I got a bowl and a wash-rag, just as I used to do with poor

Jimmy, and this little fellow as good as told me that he wasn't used to any bowls, nor anything of that sort, and he wanted an ocean, at least, to splash around in; you would have thought he was a regular duck if you had seen him splash the water over him, and heard him chuckle when I put him into a tub — just a common wash-tub, you know.

"Bless you! he didn't care for that, so there was plenty of water. Now, Mr. Porter, it stands to reason that folks who have gone to wreck and ruin as that poor Mrs. Bailey's brother has, don't take pains to put their babies in a bath-tub every morning, to splash and kick and crow for fifteen minutes. I tell you this baby has been very daintily taken care of. If Mrs. John Remington won't give a good yell when she sees him, then I miss my guess."

Nevertheless, of course there was a great deal of nervous excitement attendant upon this journey. Mr. Porter sent a telegram to Dr. Coles, and found a reply waiting for him at one of the stations.

He and Mrs. Blake kept their own council during the journey, Mr. Porter arguing that there was a possibility of there having been a mistake, and that if the story got abroad it might not only hinder in some way plans which had undoubtedly been set on foot for finding the child, but would suggest to all manners and conditions of people the possibility of getting money out of the stricken father,

by telegraphing him for means to bring stray children to his house.

"The fact is, Mrs. Blake," he said, in response to that good woman's incredulity, "you do not understand the wicked world as well as I do. In some things you are a great deal wiser than I; but I'm disposed to think that I know more of what evil men will do to carry out their designs, or to get a little money, than has ever entered your mind.

"Why, a few years ago I was mixed up in a case somewhat similar to this. A child was decoyed away from home for the purpose of getting hold of the pretty clothes that it wore, and the gold chain around its neck, I suppose; and during the seven weeks that the search was kept up before any trace of that baby was found, to my certain knowledge the father received no less than thirteen telegrams, calling upon him to telegraph money orders sufficient to defray the expenses of bringing children who were supposed to be his."

"For pity's sake!" said Mrs. Blake aghast. "Where did they get all the children?"

Whereupon Mr. Porter, full of anxiety as he was, relaxed sufficiently to laugh outright.

"In most cases there were no children," he explained. "The money was telegraphed of course, the father being too distracted to do other than try to follow out every possible clue; but no baby was forthcoming, and investigation proved that no such person as applied for and received the money

order, could be found in the place. They were put-up jobs, you understand; though in one instance a woman went to an orphan asylum and borrowed a baby, on the plea that she would take it into the country for a few days. Her plan worked well from her point of view; she was sharp enough to more than double the amount she would need for traveling expenses; so she had a trip to another city, a visit with her relatives, gave the baby a day's outing, and made money."

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Blake. "It makes one ashamed to live in this world, doesn't it? Sometimes there really isn't any comfort in anything, except in remembering that the Lord reigns."

These conversations were indulged in, of course, while John Remington, Jr. slept. When he was awake, he required the united attentions of Mrs. Blake and Mr. Porter; or at least he received them whether they were required or not.

"He is an interesting little chap," said Mr. Porter, in the interval of a grand frolic with the boy. "I declare if he isn't Mr. Remington's child I should like to adopt him. I might bring him up for my son and get you to be his grandmother," and the young bachelor laughed and regarded the "grandmother" with a pleased look, as she skillfully straightened out the crumpled clothes and brushed back the little yellow curls upon Baby John's white forehead.

"There will be no chance for you to adopt this

baby," she said complacently. "He was stolen, I tell you. His name is John Shield Remington. Why, if you had see him when I first did, you'd know, Mr. Porter. He was all stained up with some stuff to make him look sallow. When I put him into his bath and the yellow began to wash off, I tell you I was scared! Then his hair has been cut in a queer fashion; kind of chopped off. That description you brought me of the baby, you know, said he had long, yellow curls. Look at all those little yellow rings around his head. Anything to hinder their having been long curls a few days ago? I know as well as though I was there this minute; you'll see a sight to-night that will make you happy for a lifetime, Mr. Porter, if only the poor mother hasn't gone crazy before this; though I don't think she has; she's as lovely a Christian as ever lived in this world. She has gone straight to the Fountain Head for comfort, and got it, too; and I'll put the blessedest piece of comfort into her arms to-night that she has had for many an hour, I'll venture."

"God grant it," said Mr. Porter gravely. Then he went out to have a consultation with the conductor. He was a cautious man, fairly well versed in the ways of this wicked world. It was no part of his intentions to appear alone, unprotected and unaided, at the railroad station not far from which the Remingtons lived, with possibly their stolen baby in his arms.

He reflected that the villains connected with this business would be more than likely to have emissaries at the railroad, watching the train, lest possibly something should develop that might criminate them. "These rascals cannot trust one another," he said to himself; "they cannot be sure but that the very ones whom they trusted have decided to give away the whole thing. I shall be prepared for emergencies of every sort."

Therefore, when the train steamed in at the station, and Mr. Porter, gathering the sleeping boy in his arms, followed closely by Mrs. Blake, appeared on the platform, he was met at once by two stalwart officers of the law, the foremost of whom touched his cap and said, "Porter?" and receiving a nod, they escorted them swiftly and silently to a close carriage, and both mounted with the driver.

"For the land of pity," said Mrs. Blake, fairly gasping for breath, "if I didn't think we were took! What's all that for? How did there happen to be a carriage right here, Mr. Porter, and those policemen on guard? Did you plan that? Were you afraid there would be some attempt to steal the baby again? I never thought of it. You have a long head, that's a fact. I should have just plunged right in and asked everybody I met the way to Mr. Remington's. But it might have been dangerous, that's true. O, dear me! I hope there is no mistake."

Within the Remington parsonage an excited company was gathered in consultation. Mrs. Remington sat back in the rocking-chair, her hands clasped in an almost convulsive effort to keep herself quiet; her eyes closed, her face as pale as the white woolen gown she wore. She was taking no part in the eager talk, and looked like one who was holding herself away from it, trying to learn not to have interest in it. John Remington, leaning against his wife's chair, was giving earnest heed to every word that Earle Mason was pouring out with rapid utterance.

"I am sure it is a clue," he said; "I know almost to a certainty that it is little John's curl; and Mrs. Nolan was excited and embarrassed to such a degree that she contradicted herself twice in the course of a very brief conversation. I have arrested her and her husband, any way. They are conferring together in the lockup to-night. Unless they can concoct some story that will agree better than the one which they have told me separately to-day, it will go hard with them. I am persuaded that in some way they are implicated in this."

"But you could get no clue to the possible whereabouts of the child?" faltered John Remington, "as to whether he is alive, even?"

"No," said Earle Mason reluctantly, "not yet."

Then for the first time Mrs. Remington spoke: "John, cannot you pray that he is at this moment

in the arms of the Shepherd? If he is not, think what he may be suffering!" A convulsive shiver ran through her frame.

"Black-hearted villains," muttered Earle Mason between clenched teeth. "If they had any hearts, I would like them to see what ruin they have wrought here." This in an aside to Elsie Chilton, who was standing near him, listening intently to every word that was spoken, but with eyes fixed upon Mrs. Remington.

She drew them slowly away now, and looked at Earle Mason. "Isn't it terrible?" she said, low-toned. "It is so much worse than it would be if she would cry or scream or wring her hands. I wish she would not control herself so terribly. I am afraid her reason will give way."

"Sometimes to lose one's reason for a while is a merciful deliverance," said Earle Mason gravely. "Did you give her the curl, Miss Chilton?"

"Yes, I did; I thought then that she would cry, it looked so like his, lying there soft and silky in her hand. But she didn't; she smiled, and said to me in that strange tone of hers, which suggests that her heart has broken, 'If I could know to a certainty that the little head which wore it was resting on Jesus' breast!' She has not shed a tear to-day."

"Then she knew the curl," said Earle Mason; "I was sure she would. It could belong to no other head than little John's. Miss Chilton, I do

not think the child is dead; I feel hopeful to-night, more so than I have before. I haven't, perhaps, what sounds like a very good reason for it, but I cannot get away from the feeling."

"Tell them so," said Elsie quickly. "Tell them how you feel; they have such confidence in your judgment, I think it will help them."

"It is not a matter of judgment, but of faith," he said, with a grave smile, but he turned toward the father and mother.

"Dear friends," he said, "I cannot believe you are to think of little John as utterly gone from you. I cannot get away from the growing conviction that we shall find him safe and well. If I had any tangible proof of it to put into your hands, I do not know that it would influence you any more than to tell you that the feeling came to me while I was on my knees. I believe the Lord put it into my heart. I think in some way, I don't know how, we are going to get word of the little one before long. I know I was never so sensible of a direct answer to prayer in my life, as I was to-night."

"God bless you!" said John Remington, his voice broken and tremulous like that of a man bowed with years. "To have a friend like you, who prays as well as works, is worth everything to us now. Mattie dear, I cannot help having something of the same feeling which Mason expresses. Not so strong as his, perhaps; I will confess that

my faith has been sorely tried, but it came to me from the same source as his. I think God sent it; let us trust him, Mattie."

"Amen!" said the white lips, but the speaker did not unclose her eyes nor move a muscle of her face; and Aunt Hannah, who, unable to sit still, had been moving softly up and down the long room, shook her head and murmured: "Poor lamb! poor stricken lamb!"

At that moment the door leading into the back hall opened softly, not more than two or three inches, but enough to reveal Jane's eyes and her beckoning finger, as she tried to get the attention of Elsie Chilton. Something in the eyes thus wildly staring at her made Elsie, the moment her attention had been arrested, move swiftly toward the door, open it just enough to allow herself egress, and passing out, she closed it after her.

"What's the matter, Jane?" she asked quickly.

CHAPTER XV.

"WE'VE GOT HIM!"

"O, MISS CHILTON!" said the girl, clasping her hands hysterically, and speaking in a stage whisper, "we've got him! we've got him! He is out there in the dining-room, all well and everything, and I didn't know how to tell them; and I'm afraid it will kill her!"

"Come with me," said Elsie, and she took swift strides toward the dining-room. The sight which met her eyes was photographed on her brain, never to be forgotten. Near the door stood a tall, clerical looking young man, hat in hand; apparently nobody had thought to offer him a seat, or show him ordinary courtesy. Assuredly Elsie did not; for, plumped into a dining-chair in the middle of the room, was a grandmotherly looking woman, plain of dress and face, holding fast to a little bundle of gray cloak, above which arose a well-shaped head covered with moist rings of yellow hair, the owner of which, with his back to Elsie, was gazing around him, apparently in unspeakable delight. Elsie never knew how she got from the

door to that chair, nor how she looked as she laid hands on the gray cloak and turned its occupant around. Nor could she ever describe how she felt when the beautiful blue eyes of little John met hers, and his face broke into that radiant smile peculiar to himself, as he said in sweetest tones, "Ottissey," for this, be it known, was the remarkable name by which he had designated Elsie.

Earnest and often repeated had been the attempts to teach John Shield Remington to say Aunt Elsie. Why the rosebud lips had obstinately refused to frame those syllables, when he spoke other and more difficult ones with perfect ease, and had chosen to call her with distinct and clear utterance, a word of his own coining, "Ottissey," will be known only to those philosophers who succeed in translating baby language and giving us a satisfactory treatise on baby mental science. But "Ottissey" Elsie Chilton was, and "Ottissey" would she probably remain to the end of this opinionated young man's career.

"Oh, you darling! you darling! you darling!" fairly screamed Elsie, snatching the radiant child and smothering him in kisses; then dashing him back, all in the same breath, into the arms of the motherly woman, said, addressing her and speaking frantically: "How shall we do it? Oh! how shall we tell her? I'm afraid it will be too much for her! What shall we do?"

"I would advise," said Mr. Porter, coming

quietly forward in this emergency, "that you call the father, perhaps; or, if he cannot leave his wife, and there is any other member of the family — is there a grandmother?"

"O, yes!" said Elsie eagerly; "Aunt Hannah, the best grandmother in the world. That is just the thing, thank you."

She took great credit to herself afterward, for the composed manner in which she opened that sitting-room door, and the natural tone of voice in which she said, "Aunt Hannah, will you come here a moment, please?" Though Earle Mason assured her that nothing so ecstatically unnatural had ever before issued from her lips.

"I felt a series of electric thrills," he declared, "from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, the moment I heard your voice. I knew that something magnificent had happened; and what could have been magnificent just then, but one thing."

However, neither father nor mother heard the summons. Aunt Hannah went swiftly, leaving Earle Mason to hold the fort and control his impatience as best he could. "Child, what in the world is the matter?" asked Aunt Hannah, as soon as Elsie had closed the door after her. "You look as though — as though" —

"Yes," said Elsie, "I do. It is so, Aunt Hannah; we've got him, alive and well. Oh, the darling! Come here, quick!"

Aunt Hannah, nearer fainting than ever she was in her life before, had only time to sternly tell her foolish heart to stop its fluttering and behave itself, before she heard the sweetest music that she thinks will ever enter her ears. "Gamma," said the dear voice, that she had thought never to hear again on earth, "Gamma," with a little happy chuckle over the name, and shaking off the gray cloak which had been a trial all day to little John, he held out his queer little red woolen arms, and laid his head with a gurgle of infinite satisfaction on her breast, and was enfolded once more in the loving arms that had ached so to gather him.

"Thank the Lord!" was Aunt Hannah's first fervent cry. Her next thought was for somebody else. "How shall we tell his mother?"

"Yes," said Elsie, "we thought you would know. What shall we do, Aunt Hannah?"

"It is a good plan to let her hear his voice; then some one ought to carry him to her at once. Who will do it?"

"Aunt Hannah," said Elsie, "you are the one who ought to have the honor of taking him to his mother." Then Aunt Hannah rose to the heights of her best nature. Long and fierce had been the struggle with her heart to endure the sight of Jane. Jane, who had been unfaithful to her trust, and left their darling under the tree, and gone away out of sight, out of hearing of him, to get herself a glass of water!

"I shall never be able to endure the sight of the girl in this world or the next," she had said once, in fierce excitement. It was the stricken mother who had turned her dumb by answering: "O, Aunt Hannah! think how the poor girl must suffer. She loved little John."

Over and over had Aunt Hannah said those words to herself, said them respectfully, reverently, as one who had heard the voice of an angel. "She is a better woman than I am," she told herself, "with all my sixty years of profession. I can keep along a smooth road with some kind of decency, but when it comes to such a place as this I'm nowhere. I won't say another word against the girl, and I'll try to be sorry for her; but I don't know whether I'll ever learn to stand it to have her around; and I do hope it won't be my duty to speak to her very often. If I were at the head of things I should try to get her a good place, and see that she was treated all right; but it doesn't seem to me that I could have her around."

All through the hours this battle had been fought. Aunt Hannah had not been able to bring herself to ask Jane to give her a glass of water, to close the blinds or move the screen or do the least thing for her comfort. Jane, who had been deft-handed and quick-witted, and was a favorite with her to the degree that she had devoted much of her leisure time while Baby John was sleeping, to

looking after Aunt Hannah's comfort — how could Jane bear it? And how could Aunt Hannah bear it herself? She hated herself for the feeling. "I'd get over it if I could," she told herself humbly, "and maybe after a long time I can; but just now I can't abide the girl, and that's the whole of it. A drink of water, indeed! If she hadn't been thinking so much about drinks of water, I'd have my lamb here in his crib this minute. And me to forgive her! when I know all about taking care of a baby, and never let my John out of my sight five minutes of a day until he was old enough to take care of himself."

Poor Jane had understood all this as well as though it had been said to her. Not a word of reproach had Aunt Hannah uttered in her presence; she had simply looked — or failed to look. And Jane shrank from her, and cowered before her, and trembled at the thought of her, yet felt in her inmost heart that it was no more than she deserved. "I'd do just so myself, and worse too," said the poor girl. "I'd kick her out of the house if I was the mistress, and she'd gone and lost him just for a drink. I wish I needn't ever drink no more water as long as I live. To be sure the other one — the mother — she put her hand on my arm and said she knew I didn't mean to do wrong; but then, she's an angel, and everybody knows she is; and folks can't be angels, all of them; there's got to be women. O, my land! I don't expect her

ever to forgive me, 'cause I never mean to forgive myself, never!"

So these two had lived their trying lives together during these terrible days. It all flashed over Aunt Hannah, the spirit that she had shown, the added burden which she had laid upon the heart of the poor girl. In an instant her resolution was taken. "Where's Jane?" she said, looking around her. "Didn't I see her? Here, Jane, you may take him to his mother."

"O, ma'am!" said Jane, coming forward, her hands clasped hysterically, "O, ma'am! you can't mean it?"

"Dane!" said little John, in the most gracious and condescending manner possible, and then, with one of his sudden baby impulses, he flung himself forward from his grandmamma's arms into those of the almost crazy Jane. "Aunt Hannah," murmured Elsie, "that was sublime."

"Now," said Mr. Porter, who had decided that he must be commander-in-chief of this bewildered regiment, "lead the way, somebody, and open the parlor door." Then to little John: "Call your mamma, my boy."

"Aunt Hannah," said Elsie, seizing that trembling woman's arms, "let's go in," and she made a dash for the back parlor. Earle Mason was still pacing distractedly up and down the floor; he had given over any attempt to talk to the father and mother, and was waiting with strained ears and

fast-beating heart for developments which he felt sure were coming from the other room. Mr. Remington bent over his wife, and was lost to all but her, murmuring low in her ear tender, pitiful, soothing words. Neither of them noticed that the door was opened.

"Hark!" Mr. Mason said suddenly, stopping short before Mrs. Remington's chair, impelled, he declared afterward, by the look in Elsie Chilton's eyes. Clear and sweet rang out on the evening air, "Mamma!"

It was the one voice in all the world that could appeal to the depths of Mrs. Remington's very soul. She gave a spring, sat upright, and looked at her husband in a strange, puzzled way. "John," she said, "have I died, and is this heaven?"

Then appeared before her the very earthly vision of Jane, trembling so that she could hardly hold the wide-awake, eager boy in her arms. Then again, and this time gleefully, rang out that happy voice: "Mamma," and little John gave one of his great bounds, and settled his head in a pretty, roguish way in his mother's neck.

"Let us pray," said John Remington, dropping on his knees. "Somebody pray."

It was the clear, strong voice of the stranger minister which, after a moment's silence, took up the words of prayer; he realized that he alone, of all that company, could be expected to have sufficient self-control to put into a form of words the

hallelujahs which must needs go up from the home that night.

"Well," said Earle Mason, giving a long-drawn sigh, which with him indicated relief from a severe mental strain that had been upon him for some days and nights without any let-up, "the question is, What will come next? What will those creatures, bent on self-destruction, concoct next in revenge against the temperance workers, and who will be their victims?" They were alone together in Mr. Remington's study. The two men, having always had much in common, had been drawn closer together by the experiences of the last few weeks.

Mr. Remington was seated at his study table, and had a package of letters before him, but he was tilted back in his study chair in a position which meant restfulness, and Earle Mason had thrown himself into the large rocker which stood between the windows, and while they talked was giving partial attention to the passers-by on the street.

Two blissful weeks had passed since little John returned to his earthly kingdom, and never did any of royal blood reign more supremely than he, or have more devoted subjects. Mrs. Remington, despite her earnest attempts to regain self-control, had hardly yet been able to allow him out of her sight during a single moment of her waking hours,

and indeed she slept with one hand resting on his crib, and gave sudden frightened starts into wakefulness many times through the night, because her brain took revenge for the fearful strain which had been imposed upon it, and lived over again in dreams the terrible scenes of those two days. His royal highness had not been out in his little carriage since his return; indeed, the carriage had been banished to the attic, and not a member of the family, least of all Jane, ever wanted to see it again. This had not been done during the baby's absence. The mother had herself arranged pillows and sunshade and gay afghan, just as she would if it were going to be used in a few minutes, and directed that the carriage be left in the back hall in its accustomed corner, ready. But directly she had her darling in her arms again she was seized with convulsive shudders at the sight of that carriage, and began to realize, as she had not before, what a fearful strain she had imposed upon herself.

Not that little John was housed; he walked out twice a day, but always with mother on one side and father on the other, each holding a little bunch of soft down which represented a mittened fist, and oftentimes with Aunt Hannah and Elsie Chilton bringing up the rear, to say nothing of Earle Mason, who joined them as often as opportunity afforded. "I do not wonder at Mrs. Remington's nervousness," he said gravely, on one of these occasions; "I find that every sense is on the alert,

and that I study the face of every stranger we pass, lest possibly evil designs may lurk behind them. Also, I confess, in the hope that there may come the man I am looking for, or some of his accomplices."

For this young lawyer had set his heart and wits upon finding and bringing to stern justice the worthless man whose evil brain had concocted and carried out the scheme so worthy of him. Of course as soon as Mrs. Blake's story was heard it had been discovered who was the leading spirit in the matter. But although Earle Mason had before midnight on the day of little John's return, set at work forces calculated to find him in his haunts, he was nowhere to be found. There were people in plenty who had seen him during the week — yesterday, the day before, yes, even that very day, but a few hours before — yet apparently the earth had opened and swallowed him; for as yet no clue had been found with which to trace him.

The disappointed searchers would have understood the matter better had they known that the man himself was skulking around the station on the night of Baby John's return; not watching for developments connected with that scheme — he was satisfied with those arrangements, and considered the matter well out of his hands for a time — but intent upon another plan which needed his personal supervision. He was astonished and dis-

mayed to see a tall man appear on the platform of the in-coming train with a child in his arms who, asleep though he was, could yet be distinctly seen in the strong electric light, and, in the choice language of the disturbed looker-on, was pronounced to be "that Remington brat if it was anybody!" And he watched, with what feelings may be imagined, the approach of the two tall policemen, and their prompt escort to a close carriage in waiting, not failing to notice, also, that they mounted the box with the driver.

Within half an hour of that moment the accomplished villain knew that the sooner he made good his escape and covered up all trace of his flight, the safer it would be for him. So while he skulked and glowered in the smoking-car of an out-going train that night — a train which left the station in less than two hours from the moment that Baby John arrived — he went over all his well-laid plans and tried to contrive how it was possible they should have miscarried. It was years since the fellow had known anything of Stony Ridge. His memory of it was an out of the way, forsaken, desolate place, back from the railroad, and indeed back from everything. As he knew the place they took no daily papers, nor, for the matter of that, weekly papers, and had no civilization of any sort.

"'Tain't even place enough to have a saloon," he had explained to his worthy comrades, when he was planning the hiding-place of little John. And

he reflected complacently that there "wa'n't no Sunday meetin's and parsons to interfere, either." How under the sun people so benighted and uncivilized could have any knowledge of what was going on in the great world, or, having heard of the stolen baby, could have conceived that the motherless chap whom his tender-hearted father had consigned to such careful hands and sent to claim the sympathies of his long-suffering sister, was the child for whom search was being made, was more than the brain behind those scowling brows could imagine. Had he not written a letter about how the mother had died, how he had tried to care for the young one himself, but had felt that it must have a woman's hands about it, and so begged her to receive his poor boy for the sake of the love she used to bear him? And now here, within three days of the time when he had run such risks, and been at such expense, behold the young one steps off the incoming train, shielded and guarded on every side! and by this time there was no telling how much of his share in the matter that pesky father and his pesky lawyer knew.

"It was one of them long-haired ministers," he muttered, "that has outwitted me again. I'm blamed if I don't hate the whole race of 'em. He was one, I'll be bound; I'd know them in Botany Bay. Smooth-faced, smooth-tongued, prinked-up looking fellows, goin' around meddlin' with other

folk's business! I'd like to wipe 'em all out of existence. Just look at the time and money I've lost on this job! Now got to skulk off in the night like a thief."

Even this man gave a little start as he thought these words. It came upon him with a sudden sharp twinge just at that moment, that the word actually described him; he was a thief, that meanest of all thieves, a child stealer; that he had risked what shreds of reputation he had, and made himself an object of such hopeless suspicion that perhaps he would never dare to go back to his home again. And all for nothing! Being the man he was, it is no wonder that he muttered curses on the whole race of whining hypocrites known as ministers and their dupes, nor that he drew out a black bottle from his shabby pocket and drank deeply. But he kept wits enough about him to cover up his trail so effectually that, thus far, Earle Mason's most earnest efforts had failed in discovering any clue which might lead to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRESENTIMENTS.

"I'LL tell you what it is," said Mr. Mason, suddenly sitting bolt upright, and gazing out of the window after a passer-by, "I have a suspicion, or a presentiment — I hardly know what to call it, I certainly have not proof enough to say it is a conviction, perhaps fear is the word I want — that Miss Redpath will come to grief in some way. She is very fearless, Mr. Remington; you should have heard her last night. I have heard her speak several times at those gospel temperance meetings, but last night she was at her best. She told one or two tremendous stories, which were enough to reach the heart of a stone; mentioned streets and names, and vouched for the truth of every word she uttered. There are always some hard characters in her meetings, and she is beginning to be, like yourself, a special mark for evil eyes. I don't know what will come of it, but if she were my sister, I should be afraid; and for the matter of that she is my sister, you know, in the highest sense of the word, so I am afraid. I waited last

night until nearly every one had left the hall — hung around the door for the purpose of seeing them safely to their carriage, and then was nervous to the degree that I hailed a policeman and told him to keep it in sight until it reached the main avenue."

"Who was with her?" asked Mr. Remington. "She doesn't go to these meetings unattended?"

"O, yes! she does; that is, there is always some lady friend, but no one who could protect her from insult. Miss Chilton was with her last night; she sang at the meeting, and sang a little better than I have heard even her sing before; one of those terrible ballads, full of pathos and power. It had as great an effect as the lecture, and led on to fear that the singers, as well as the speakers, are beginning to be very obnoxious to the trade. It is getting to be a dangerous world, Mr. Remington, now that's a fact. If I had a very great deal of influence with either of those ladies, I would try to impress upon them the importance of always being attended by a gentleman, and by one who would be on the alert and know what to do in case of emergency."

"But what could they do?" asked Mr. Remington. "There is no child in either family to steal, and Miss Redpath's brothers are quite out of the question — as much beyond their reach as you and I. It isn't possible that they would dare to offer personal violence! What is it you fear?"

"I do not know," said Earle Mason gloomily. "I have all faith in the ability of these wretches to concoct evil. Just how they could touch either lady, I am not sure, but I know that both are watched by some of the vilest looking men which this city affords, and I am getting nervous to the degree that, as I say, I would give some earnest advice if I had the right to do so."

Mr. Remington mused a few minutes silently, and wheeled his chair around so that he was face to face with his guest, and said with a smile and a slightly apologetic note in his voice: "Mason, I am about to presume on friendship and ask you a very peculiar question, which perhaps I have no right to ask; and if you think so, I will excuse you from making any answer. But I am sometimes filled with wonder as to what you can be about, to let a young woman like Miss Chilton walk in and out before you day after day and week after week, and not be seized with the desire to secure the right to protect her from any possible indignities which you may fear. In other words, I am so fond of you both, that I would quite enjoy meddling and turning matchmaker, if I knew how. But I haven't given any attention to that line of work, and I am afraid I should be a bungler."

Mr. Mason was silent for so long as to almost make his host fear that he meant to take him at his word, and offer no reply whatever. At last he spoke in a somewhat constrained voice: "It is

not necessary to waste any of your strength on wonderments, my friend. I don't know why I should not frankly tell you the whole story; it is a very short one. I became interested in Miss Chilton the first time I ever met her; and the interest grew so rapidly in a week's time as to almost alarm me. Then I discovered that she was engaged to Aleck Palmer, and of course knew that she could be nothing to me, and that it was my business not to think about her at all; but it was a business in which I failed somewhat," with a faint smile. "The trouble was, I knew as well then as I know now, that the man was unworthy of her. I had never seen such a monstrous sacrifice as it seemed to me that would be; there were whole nights when I tossed on my bed, wide awake, absolutely certain that it ought not to be, that something ought to be done — somebody ought to step in and save the sacrifice. I told myself that I was perfectly conscientious in this matter, and I believe I was; that I had no sinister motives; that I could give her up willingly, for her sake, to one who was worthy of her; but to see her married to that man seemed almost more than I could bear."

The lounging chair had held this gentleman as long as it could; at this point he sprang up and began a nervous pacing back and forth through the room, struggling visibly with intense excitement.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Remington, with

respectful gravity; "I did not know I was probing so deep a wound, Mason; I had no business to interfere."

"Your interest in me can never be considered interference," said Earle Mason earnestly. "You cannot understand, I suppose, why I am so excited over it now, nor why, feeling as I did, I stood by with apparent indifference, content with mere friendship, when she has so long been free; but I had my reasons. In the first place, I wanted to be sure of my own self, that I was not a mean wretch who desired to break the hearts of other people if I could not have what I wanted for myself. During the first months after their estrangement I suffered for her; my heart ached for her. I tell you honestly, Remington, I never looked out upon a moonlight evening without a groan in my heart for the thought of the dreams that must be shattered because of the hopes centered in a man utterly unworthy of them, yet whom she must have invested with all the virtues, in order to have promised herself to him at all. I thought that the least I could do was not to intrude myself upon her during that time. Then there was another consideration, a very grave one, of course; I was, and am, as you are aware, utterly obnoxious to her father; I grow more so, apparently, as the days go by. You say Miss Chilton thinks he has softened considerably; I hope it may be so, to her, but he certainly has not changed in his feelings

toward me. From barely recognizing me on the street he changed at first to a cold stare, then to almost a sneer. He will even cross the street sometimes, apparently to avoid meeting me. I cannot understand why I should be an object of such special hatred, unless he has the impression that my ambitions aspire even as high as his daughter, and scorns me for the thought."

He was silent for a moment, during which time he resumed his seat near the window. "I am going to make a clean breast of it," he said at last, with a faint smile. "I had not thought when I came in here, to make you my confessor, but you started me yourself in this direction. The fact is, brother Remington, I have known for a long time that I was probably destined to lead a lonelier life than most men choose. Since I have discovered that there was but one woman in the world whom I should ever care to have for a life companion, and discovered at nearly the same time that she was not for me, I have fought the battle out, and decided that I must be satisfied with friendships, such as strong, good men and pure-hearted Christian women could give me, and with borrowed homes such as yours and a very few others where I am welcome."

"But, man alive!" said Mr. Remington, beginning in his turn to pace the floor, "what do you mean by yielding the ground in this tame manner? It isn't in the least like you. Why should not

that 'one woman in the world' be for you? Certainly the way is perfectly clear now, so far as any other friendships of hers are concerned; and as for her father, women have married before without their father's consent. I am disposed to think they will again, and be justified in it, when a perfectly unreasonable man has nothing but prejudices to offer in argument against the persons of their choice. What's the matter, Mason, that you take such a resigned view of the case? You are not the man to be resigned, generally, to circumstances which can be overcome."

Mr. Mason seemed to find it hard to express himself. He yielded to another spell of silence, so long that had not both men been absorbed in their own thoughts, and entirely familiar with each other, it might have been embarrassing. Then he said, clearing his voice and speaking with something of an effort, "I do not think you know Miss Chilton, brother Remington, as well as I do. I think she is a woman who would refuse to marry, if her heart did not go with the ceremony, despite any command which her father might give her. But on the other hand, I think she is a woman also who would refuse to marry contrary to her father's wish. She is loyal to the heart's core, has borne a great deal from him already, and is formed of the material of which they made martyrs in olden times. Understanding her as well as I believe I do, I declare to you that in her loneliness

and possible dreariness, I held aloof, lest the very fact that there was a vacant, and somewhat dreary corner in her heart, might lead her to become interested in me, simply because I was near at hand and she was lonely; and that in the end this would mean only more trouble for her."

Mr. Remington gave an exclamation of impatience. "That is a height of self-abnegation to which I really think you have no right to have attained," he said emphatically. "I don't believe in it! If a man loves a woman and has reason to think she may be interested in him, let him tell her so frankly; then, if difficulties arise in their pathway, let them bear them together. I do not think Mr. Chilton is the sort of man to whom his daughter ought to be sacrificed. If she made a choice unworthy of a Christian woman it would be another matter altogether. But when a father places money and political influence and social position, and all those meaner motives, before cultured Christian manhood, that is another thing. I confess I do not understand your resignation, nor approve of it."

"I may have been hard on myself," said Earle Mason gravely; "I do not know. It is a serious thing to come between father and child. I have thought I would never be guilty of it. Does it occur to you, Mr. Remington, that Mr. Chilton's eternal welfare may rest upon the influence which his daughter continues to have over him?"

"No," said Mr. Remington emphatically; "if his daughter did wrong, and thereby lost her influence over him, then, indeed, it might be cause for bitter self-reproach; but in this age of the world, and in this country, a man who is not a tyrant does not dictate to a daughter in these matters when she arrives at a suitable age to choose for herself, and when her choice is one entirely above reproach. I say, Mason, I think you are doing injustice to yourself, and possible injury to her. Moreover, I should not be surprised if you were making more of Mr. Chilton's disfavor than the circumstances justify. He is not specially in love with you, of course, nor a great admirer of the ways by which you have circumvented some of his schemes; but at the same time he is a shrewd man, and has a great deal of common sense. His darling scheme with young Palmer failed utterly, and is out of the question; now he knows that his daughter will probably marry some day, and he must know that Earle Mason is one of the leading young lawyers of the city, and that report says 'destined to stand as high in his profession as men get.' Mr. Chilton is a man with whom that would weigh a great deal; and he is not a man who must necessarily be a boon companion with his son-in-law, or his devoted friend in any way. He could hardly expect to be, since his daughter's tastes are what they are. I don't know anything about it, Mason, except by what

Mrs. Remington calls 'intuitions,' which, I believe, men have occasionally as well as women ; but I tell you, I don't imagine the obstacles in your way are insuperable, nor believe in the least in such a meek state of resignation as you have worked up to."

There was a poor attempt at a smile on Mason's face as he said significantly, "I am glad I succeed in appearing resigned." Then, after another pause : "Mr. Remington, you said Mr. Chilton's plans in regard to the other matter had utterly failed. Do you feel so sure of that ?"

"What ?" said Mr. Remington. "I was speaking of Aleck Palmer."

"So was I."

"Well — of course they failed ! I understand that he has married a lady of wealth and rank abroad, and settled there."

"He did," said Earle Mason, "but he also buried her, only a few months after the marriage ceremony, though that part of the matter he seems to have taken some pains to keep altogether private. I did not know of it until a short time ago, though it is six or eight months since her death, I believe."

"Is it possible ?" said Mr. Remington.

"That isn't a fair statement," added Earle Mason quickly. "I have no right to say that he kept quiet about the matter. It may have been simply that he did not have intimate personal friends here with whom to correspond. It is of

no consequence. The thing is very well understood now, and he has returned to make his permanent residence here, I believe; settled up his foreign affairs, and come back to honor our city."

"You amaze me!" said Mr. Remington; "this is news indeed. But then, Mason, what of it all? So far as what we have been discussing is concerned, under the circumstances it is hardly possible that his intimacy with that family will ever be renewed. I should not expect the man to have the impudence ever to call upon Miss Chilton."

Earle Mason smiled significantly. "It was the passing of a carriage which held those two persons that started a portion of this conversation," he said gravely.

"Held Elsie Chilton and Aleck Palmer!" exclaimed Mr. Remington. "You can't mean it, Mason!"

"Mr. Chilton's carriage passed your window, my dear sir, not fifteen minutes ago. On the back seat were Miss Redpath and Miss Chilton, and sitting opposite them, talking with them, was Mr. Aleck Palmer.

"Oh! by the way, there is another item of foreign news. Dr. Fletcher is expected very soon, I understand. At least the ladies will have an escort to their temperance meetings hereafter. There is so much to be thankful for."

"I cannot understand it!" said Mr. Remington impatiently. "Women are curious creatures. I

should suppose, after what has been repeated to me as having passed between those two, that common propriety would prevent his offering her any attention. It isn't possible that she respects him. It must be that wretched father's influence over her. When fathers influence their daughters to receive the attentions of men not worthy of them, I think some one would be justified in interfering."

"Mr. Palmer may have changed," said Earle Mason, rising; "I have not known much about him since his residence abroad. People do change for the better sometimes, my friend, and there are such things as second marriages."

At the door he hesitated, and turned back to say: "It is a surprise to me that I have talked this subject over with you as I have. I had a feeling that no one would ever hear a word from me in this connection; but you are almost my second self, brother, and" —

"And I almost forced your confidence," interrupted Mr. Remington. "I beg your pardon, my dear friend, if I have hurt you. As I said, I had not an idea as to how the matter stood. But I assure you again I would not quietly submit to what need not be the inevitable. Assuredly, if I had any fears that a man like Aleck Palmer was beginning to persecute that young woman again, and I respected her heartily, to say nothing of a warmer feeling, I would try to come to her rescue."

"It is a very delicate matter to rescue people who perhaps do not wish to be rescued," said Mr. Mason, as he opened the door. "Remember, I have no claim upon Miss Chilton whatever. I have, and have had, no right to proffer her even ordinary attentions. I have had no right to call upon her at her father's house. She has received me pleasantly, cordially, in your house, as she would any friend of yours. For aught that I know to the contrary, she thinks of me only as a friend of yours. I think you can see what little right I would have had under such circumstances to show her any attention. I really do not think I know how to be intimate with a lady who has a home of her own from which I am shut out."

"Isn't it altogether possible that you make too much of that, Mason? People are in ill-humor sometimes, and speak more than they intended, or more than they really mean. I cannot imagine that a man like Mr. Chilton, in sane mind, and under reasonable self-control, would refuse a gentleman like you the courtesies of his home. I can readily understand, as I have told you before, how, for various reasons, he should dislike you; but we neither like nor admire a great many people whom we meet in society, and treat with ordinary courtesy. If you should call on his daughter at her own home, I cannot imagine that you would be refused admittance."

"Mr. Remington, if you had been distinctly told

by the head of the house that your calls were not desired, would you attempt it?"

"It would depend upon how much I respected the character of the head of the house, and how much I desired to see the other members of the family," said Mr. Remington, with unabated energy.

And then Earle Mason went away.

The minister, on his part, found himself so perturbed with the information he had received, that he deserted the study, letters, sermon and all, and went in search of his wife. In her room, with little John asleep in his crib beside them, the two discussed earnestly Elsie Chilton's affairs, past, present and future, and decided emphatically that there was not the slightest fear, not the very slightest, that she would ever change her mind with regard to Aleck Palmer.

"And Earle Mason is a simpleton!" said Mrs. John Remington, with such emphasis that little John started in his sleep, and threw up a protesting hand; "I really thought he had more sense and more skill in reading human nature than to — O, well! I'm not going to say that; only, he doesn't deserve to have Elsie Chilton if he cannot win her, that is all."

"He has an unusually high sense of honor," said Mr. Remington thoughtfully, "and it obliges him to stand in his own light sometimes."

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPLICATIONS.

MEANTIME, the object of all this solicitation was having, as the days went by, an unexpected experience.

The advent of Mr. Aleck Palmer into her social world again was somewhat startling. He had been in town but three days, when he passed in the Chilton carriage, with Elsie and Miss Redpath for companions. Various social duties had held Elsie for the unusual space of three days, from making her accustomed trips to the Remington home, which accounted for the new arrival not being heralded there.

As for the ride together which had disturbed Earle Mason so much, it was no part of Elsie's planning. She was at first not disturbed by Aunt Emily's announcement that "Mrs. Hargrave said Aleck Palmer had lost his wife, and settled up his foreign affairs and come home to stay." She had evinced but little interest in the information, and had shown by her manner that Aleck Palmer and his comings and goings were nothing to her.

She reflected that it was not likely they would meet for some time, at least. Probably, since he was in affliction, he did not go into general society; and indeed she went herself as little as possible into the society which belonged to his clique. So within a half-hour from the time when she heard of his arrival she had dismissed him from her thoughts, and was astonished and not a little annoyed to meet him on that very evening at their own dinner table. She had been detained in the library by one of the secretaries of their missionary society, and had sent word that they were not to wait for her, so dinner was in progress when she entered the dining-room.

"We had to waive all ceremony, daughter," said Mr. Chilton, as she paused on her way to her seat at sight of a stranger with his back to her. "I have a special engagement this evening, and was obliged to hasten. We have an old acquaintance here, Elsie, as a surprise for you."

At the sound of the word, "Daughter," Mr. Aleck Palmer had risen and turned to meet her. His manner was simply perfect. There was no effusive pleasure expressed, no excitement, no embarrassment. His face and action said as plainly as words could have done: "Yes, we are old acquaintances, it is true, but a gulf has rolled between us since that time — a gulf of sorrow and wrecked hopes."

He had the air of a man who had lost his home,

and his friend, and left his heart in a grave. He was quiet, reserved and apparently indifferent. Before the dinner was over Elsie had decided that she was sorry for him, and that she had nothing to fear from him in the future; which thought would not have given her so much comfort, perhaps, if she had realized that this was precisely the impression which he desired, and intended to make.

When the family adjourned to the parlor the guest had but very few words for Elsie, and these mere commonplaces. He appeared exceedingly well, said just enough about his own experiences to impress one with the feeling that here was a man who had suffered, and that the wound was too deep to be touched.

"You have heard of my great bereavement, I suppose?" he said. And Elsie explained that she had not heard it until a very short time before; and tried to express in a brief sentence the proper sympathy.

He interrupted her, sorrowfully. "It was months ago," he said; "but I find that my friends in America know nothing about it. That is not strange; I did not write — I could not. Some things cannot be written. It is hard enough to have to live them." With a long-drawn sigh and a grave bow he turned away, and gave his exclusive attention to her father for the next fifteen minutes, then excused himself.

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Chilton, returning from

the door when he had seen his guest out. "He is crushed. I never saw such a change in a man. He cannot even attend to business, though he has plenty of it, and of great importance upon his hands. He will break into the midst of a business statement with some reminiscence of his wife."

Elsie listened complacently. She was certainly better satisfied with Aleck Palmer than she had been before in years. If he had married a good woman and was capable of cherishing her memory, Elsie thought it might have been of great benefit to him. "Though I should think," she told herself, "that it must have been a comfort to her to die. Why, what am I saying! Of course she loved him, or she would not have married him; but it seems so very strange that a good woman could! though perhaps she did not know him as I do. I hope she did not. Since she was to be his wife, I really hope he succeeded in seeming good to her!" And then this young lady dismissed him from her thoughts and her world.

Two days afterwards, she and her friend Miss Redpath were making a series of business calls. As the carriage passed her father's office Elsie said, "Oh! I must stop here a moment. I have a telephone message for papa that he will need to receive at once."

Mr. Chilton had been sent for, and had come to the carriage door to receive the message, accom-

panied by Aleck Palmer, who simply lifted his hat and waited.

The business matter settled, Mr. Chilton said: "Which way, daughter? Are you going to drive out to Greenhurst? Then just take Mr. Palmer in, will you? and set him down at the real estate office. That will be a shorter trip for you, Palmer, than it will to go around by street car. Oh! of course it's convenient; these ladies do not care where they drive, so that they get the air. Moreover, they are going directly past the place. Jump in."

Thus urged, Mr. Palmer took his seat, and was, during the long drive, the same grave, preoccupied man who had dined with them two days before; and the carriage rolled in due time past the Remington parsonage; its occupants being distinctly visible to Earle Mason in the easy-chair.

The weeks which followed were full of curious bewilderments to Elsie Chilton. No dove sheltered securely in her nest, was ever more closely watched by a wily serpent than was she.

Truth to tell, Aleck Palmer was a gentleman who knew generally what he was about, and he never knew better than at this moment. He had married in haste, and the uppermost feeling in his mind during that exciting time when he had planned the engagement and marriage, had been an intense desire to pique Elsie Chilton. So little did he understand the past that he could not be-

lieve, however angry she might have been with him temporarily, that she had the least intention of losing him entirely. He had for so many years believed himself to be the most important marriageable gentleman in society as to be unable to conceive of the possibility of a woman who had a chance to marry him, actually refusing to do so. She was simply testing her power; and he resolved to prove to her the sharpest of all lessons — that it was possible for a woman to go too far. Since she had dismissed him in the indignant way she had — insulted him, indeed — he would show her the result. And the result was, his wedding cards.

Let me hasten to do him the justice to say that he did not break the heart of the woman he married. She was older than himself, in wretched health, and very tired of all the people by whom she was surrounded. She admired Mr. Palmer, and had the impression that he was wealthy enough not to desire to marry her simply for money — which was the demon that had haunted her life heretofore. She imagined that he would be an agreeable companion in the daily, weary drives the physician obliged her to take; that he would look after her houses and lands, and stocks and bonds, and was sharp enough not to allow her to be swindled; that he would protect her from fortune hunters, and agents of all description — and in short, give her a chance to finish her life in peace.

All this, be it known, he had done. Being a gentleman when he chose, and finding the elegant home to which the lady invited him agreeable, the guests which they succeeded in gathering about them, sharp business men with whom he could confer to his advantage, and finding that his wife claimed no more of his time or his interest than he chose to give, and finding that he could be a source of comfort to her as she steadily failed, he took up that part of his life which he saw was to be brief, and played it well to the very end. Nevertheless when he bade good-by to that portion of the world and started for home, such heart as Aleck Palmer could be said to possess was not buried in an English grave. Truth to tell, as much as he was capable of loving any one beside himself, Aleck Palmer loved only one, and that Elsie Chilton.

There had been times when he repented having given her so severe a lesson ; there had been times when he feared it would be a longer lesson than it had proved ; but now that it was well over he decided that, all things considered, it was the best he could have done for himself and for her. It gave him an opportunity to approach her from an entirely new side of his character, to take her unawares ; to discover to her that he, the grave, reserved, broken man, was nevertheless necessary to her comfort. To accomplish this he set himself, with all the skill which his wily nature and

keen brain possessed. Nor did he doubt that he would have a faithful ally in Elsie's father. He had not been Mr. Chilton's confidential business friend and adviser for so many years for nothing. He knew almost to a fraction the condition of that gentleman's affairs ; moreover, he knew some things which Mr. Chilton did not.

It had been part of his plans to complicate their business relations, that no one but himself could understand, or work his way successfully out. Also he had so complicated them, that he could work them out successfully or confuse them the more, whichever he chose. Part at least of the confusion was growing painfully plain to Mr. Chilton.

That Mr. Palmer was responsible for such a condition of affairs he did not understand; but that Mr. Palmer alone was capable of saving to him a large amount of money, was only too apparent.

If Mr. Palmer was a schemer, so also was Mr. Chilton. No sooner had he received a cablegram announcing that gentleman's coming, than he began to think: "What if his thousands which were in peril, could be saved to him and added to by almost innumerable thousands by making his interests and Mr. Palmer's one? And how could this better be done than by reviving the old plan, the failure of which had been the heavy disappointment of his life? Men as young as Palmer were sure to marry again. This had been but a brief

episode in his life, easily forgotten ; and Elsie was a girl whom to know once was to remember."

Mr. Chilton felt almost certain that Palmer would be willing to scheme with him in this regard. Nor had they been long together when they perfectly understood each other. Not that they were bold, outspoken men who would make coarse reference to any project of this sort. Nothing was further from the polish of the two courtly gentlemen.

Mr. Chilton's manner of giving condolence, and Mr. Palmer's manner of receiving it were perfect. But as he introduced his guest to one room to make his toilet, and retired to his own for the same purpose, he said, "He hasn't forgotten Elsie, by any manner of means. He's just as willing to see her as he ever was."

And the guest as he washed his carefully kept hands with the perfumed soap, said to himself with a complacent smile : "The old gentleman is twice as willing as he was before, that is evident. Now if he will only consent to keep in the background and let me manage the daughter, he will find that I can float him through."

And as the weeks passed in the same courtly, careful way in which it was all to be managed, Mr. Chilton was given to understand that it was Mr. Palmer's intention to "float him through" ; and to do it by the means which he himself would consider the safest for all concerned.

Meantime Elsie, in blissful ignorance of all this scheming, moved on at first in her quiet way ; relieved exceedingly to find that Aleck Palmer continued his grave, courteous, indifferent bearing towards her. Never calling at the house with the ostensible purpose of seeing her, but asking always for the father. Explaining always that business complications had arisen which made it necessary for them to meet ; giving always exceedingly few words to her.

" He has really improved very much," Elsie explained to her one confidant, Mrs. Remington, as they sat together on a rainy evening. " I could almost enjoy his society sometimes nowadays. He has had rare opportunities abroad, you know, this last time, for meeting celebrities, visiting fine private libraries, and seeing private collections of rare paintings. It is really interesting to hear him talk. He addresses very little of his conversation to me ; but sometimes when papa keeps him waiting, he entertains Aunt Emily. I am always a little sorry for him he has such an air of sadness about him, as if it were an effort to talk, but as though he realized that he must exert himself and entertain her. If I could forget a few things in the past, Mrs. Remington, I could almost respect Mr. Palmer, just because of the feeling he evidently has for his dead wife. Someway I didn't believe it possible that he could have loved her. I think I didn't expect him to love anybody but himself."

"Do you see much of him?" inquired Mrs. Remington.

"Oh! very little indeed, and then as I said, only by accident. He has some complicated business connections with papa. I don't understand it, but it is something which has been worrying papa I think in the past, and which is being settled to his satisfaction now. I know he has great confidence in Mr. Palmer's powers of management. Whenever any complication occurs, matters have to be talked over. So Mr. Palmer calls frequently. When papa is at home and at leisure they retire at once to the study, and we see no more of them that night. But if, as often occurs, he arrives when papa is down town, or before he has left his dressing-room, it becomes necessary of course for some one to entertain the guest; or rather for him to arouse himself and entertain us, which he does I tell you, always with an effort. The result of which is he succeeds in being entertaining.

"I don't know that I can make you understand what I mean, and it is an extremely silly thing to say — I shouldn't think of saying it to anybody else — but it is really such a pleasant sensation to sit in the same room with Aleck Palmer and know that I am nothing to him, and he is nothing to me, and that we are both satisfied about it, and perfectly indifferent to each other, that it actually gives me almost a sense of comfort in his presence such as I never experienced before."

If Mrs. Remington had spoken her thoughts, which she was much too wise to do, they would have been after this manner: "I wish I had Earle Mason behind that closet door listening to this confession. He would understand some things better than he does now."

So the weeks went by. The first days of spring, which came early in that region, were making little John wild with delight, and causing older people to feel languid and unlike entering upon their heavy duties. For instance, Elsie Chilton at the close of one of these enervating spring days, while she dressed for an evening rehearsal, declared to herself that she wished benefit concerts were out of fashion, or that she did not have to sing at them; that at least they did not have to spend this April evening in a weary rehearsal; she felt utterly unmusical; felt indeed like nothing in life so much as having a frolic with little John, and a quiet visit with his mother, after little John was asleep. Truth to tell, there were beginning to be some perplexities in these spring days, which Elsie would have been very willing to talk over with Mrs. Remington.

She was seeing much more of Aleck Palmer than she had any desire to. Not that his attentions to her were marked or offensive; his manner continued to be perfect; but the phase of the question which tried Elsie was the comments of the outside world. In one way and another, all

of which seemed perfectly natural at the time, Elsie was thrown into Mr. Palmer's society. Either her father called to her in passing, and asked her to "take him up and drop him" at this bank, or that real estate office, or he overtook her as she was about to make her way across a crowded street, or as she was trying in vain to signal a crowded car, and offered his services as pilot; or he came to see her father at a time when that gentleman was detained at a committee meeting and Aunt Emily was kept in her room with a sick headache, and waited with a subdued air of submission to the inevitable, sometimes for two mortal hours, during which time it seemed to Elsie that most of her acquaintances, especially of the class given to commenting upon other people's affairs, called upon her. By these and various other methods, had been started little ripples of talk in the circle to which the two belonged. The result of which was, that Elsie oftener than was by any means agreeable, overheard her name coupled with that of Aleck Palmer once more.

There was a reason which she did not put into words, for being annoyed about all this. Indeed, she scarcely put it into definite thought. It was unpleasant enough, certainly, to have any of that uninteresting class of people known under the general name of "society," gossiping about her, planning her future for her in such an absurd connection as this, but suppose that the gossips,

knowing certain facts, and being able to call upon their imaginations for more, should gossip before Earle Mason, for instance, and lead him or any other person whom she respected, to imagine that she could for one moment be guilty of receiving again serious attentions from Mr. Palmer! The bare supposition made Elsie's cheeks burn like fire, and the fingers which were trying to fasten the pin at her throat, trembled, as she said aloud and vehemently: "I wish I need never see him again! I wonder why it is that poor papa always has to be mixed up with people whom it is so hard for me to receive? This is too disagreeable to endure. It must be very trying to him as well as to me. It is really an insult to the memory of his wife. If I were he, I could manage things differently. It cannot be that he knows there is any such absurd talk, or he would avoid coming here at times when I am almost compelled to see him. Though after all, he is as careful as he can be perhaps. If only papa could be more considerate! I wish I could go away somewhere and stay a long, long time, until people would forget about me and let me alone. But I can't go away now before Fern is married."

The meditations and the toilet, which had been somewhat hurried, were concluded together, and Elsie rushed downstairs to meet the impatient boy who had been sent to attend her to the concert.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN "APRIL FOOL."

SHE opened the library door to give a final admonition to her father, who was reading the paper. "Now, papa, don't come earlier than ten o'clock; because if you do you will have to wait for me; and don't be later than ten, if you can help it, because then I shall have to wait for you. I'm resolved not to stay later than ten, to-night. They ought to get through by that time, and if they do not, they can get along without me."

"Very well," said her father without raising his eyes from the paper, and Elsie and her escort departed.

It was nearly two hours later, when Elsie coming from behind the scenes, into the audience room, to give some directions to one of the chorus singers, met the eyes, and received the quiet bow of Mr. Aleck Palmer, who stood, hat in hand, near the door looking about him. The audience room was partially filled, with brothers, fathers, uncles, and intimate personal friends of some of the performers; waiting in various stages of impatience

for this rehearsal to draw to a close. But Aleck Palmer's presence was a surprise. He had no sisters or cousins or intimate friends, so far as she knew, to wait for.

Why should he be here? He made his way toward her, speaking low: "I beg pardon, Miss Chilton, for the intrusion, but your father has been unexpectedly called to the Third National Bank, where a meeting of the Directors is in progress to-night. He had a very peremptory summons while I was with him attending to some business matters; and he delegated to me the duty of seeing you safely home, if you will kindly allow me to take his place, under the circumstances?"

Elsie, distressed and annoyed by so marked an attention coming on the very evening when she had resolved to arrange matters in a way to prevent that tiresome public from coupling her name so frequently with Mr. Palmer's, yet felt, of course, that there was nothing to do except to thank him for his courtesy and murmur her regrets that he should be obliged to wait.

"It is very tedious," she said; "they are exceedingly slow. Some of the leading singers among the tenors are not here yet. I am afraid it will not be possible for us to get through by ten o'clock; though I told papa not to be a moment later than that."

"I will wait of course," he said quietly. "I promised your father that you should have all due

care. He bade me tell you he would have sent the carriage, but that Mike had departed, no one knew whither, taking the keys of the stable with him. However, I can get you a carriage, if that should be your pleasure."

Elsie promptly declined this special attention. No carriage should be summoned by Aleck Palmer for her. It was a comparatively short distance to walk, and there would be groups of walkers moving in the same direction; to join them would look better than to take an exclusive trip, probably in Mr. Palmer's own private carriage.

So these two resigned themselves to their fate; Elsie to go over and over again the leading parts in the difficult selections so that one tardy comer after another might be sure of himself. This was the last rehearsal before their public appearance; and the responsible ones felt more or less nervous. Elsie found it growing much later than ten o'clock, yet felt that she could not conscientiously leave, under existing circumstances. There were some complications, changes to be made at the last moment, owing to the illness of one of the leading singers, and she was expected to rearrange the parts. Once she had gone down the hall to Mr. Palmer, explaining the necessity for longer delay, and urging that he leave her in the care of her friend, Miss Allison; whose uncle had come for her, and who lived very near their own home.

Of course he politely declined to do any such

thing; and Miss Allison, who was one of the chorus singers, finally departed with her uncle; as indeed did most of the others who had minor parts in the programme.

Meantime Mr. Palmer had come forward with a suggestion. Some old college friends of his were having a little social gathering in the dining-room below, "a sort of 'bachelor's supper,'" he said, smiling sadly; "though I do not belong in that list, of course. I declined their formal invitation; but while I am waiting will look in upon them a few minutes just for old friendship's sake, if you have no objection. I shall take care to return before the hour which you have set for adjourning."

Elsie not only had "no objection," but was relieved. It made her nervous to think of that man sitting there with folded arms, waiting patiently for her, while silly girls giggled and commented on the degree of intimacy which it indicated. She assured him that he need not take great pains to be back, even at the hour she had mentioned; for as matters then looked there was very little hope of their being through before eleven o'clock, at least. "I am very sorry," she said; "but indeed so many unexpected complications have arisen that it seems impossible to plan otherwise."

Then Mr. Palmer assured her again, with that air of gentlemanly indifference which became him so well in Elsie's estimation, that it was "of no consequence," and went away.

"Old college friends," some of those were, it is true, who gathered in the room below. Some of them were rather newer friends; men with whom Mr. Palmer, being a gentleman, had very little in common, or would have had but for the fact that certain schemes of his required their assistance, and made it desirable that he should be on exceedingly friendly terms with them; but he sought the gay scene below at an inopportune moment for himself. All of the dozen young men gathered there had already been drinking more or less deeply, and not five minutes before he made his appearance, conversation after this fashion had been going on between two of them.

"I say, Bill, I was hoping that Palmer would get in to-night just for a few minutes, and give us a chance to have some kind of a practical joke on him. It's the first of April, you know, and all's fair on that day of the year. He is such a stuck-up prig, especially lately since he has had his pockets lined with English gold; it is about as much as I can stand to meet him. I don't know of anything that would be greater fun than to see that fellow taken down a little."

"He is prouder than he ever was before," said the young person addressed as Bill, "and I should say that was unnecessary; but he knows what he is about every time, and I'm afraid you would have to get up very early in the morning to get ahead of him."

"I have a plan," answered Charlie with a silly laugh; "it would work like a charm I believe, if we could get him here. He is waiting upstairs this minute for the Chilton girl, and if he would only come down and let us entertain him while he waits, we could send him back to her in a state that would furnish some fun for this evening, and make rather rough sailing for him in the future."

"Well," said his companion, "I grant you it would have been great fun to have played a joke on him, but I don't see how you would have done it. He doesn't drink much, you know; never was overcome by it in his life, before folks."

"That's so; but there has to be a first time, don't you know? If he were down here and we had a chance to treat him, as it would be our duty to do, to our guest, don't you and I know of a certain kind of first-class liquor to order for him? It wouldn't take much of it to send him back in a very pleasant frame of mind to Miss Chilton. She's out and out temperance to the core.

"In the first place it would be a tiptop joke to see him in just a funny frame of mind, you know, and think of him as trying to walk steadily and talk properly to her; and in the second place, his cake would be all dough, so far as she was concerned. It is a capital plan if we could only get hold of him."

Just then, as Aleck Palmer's evil genius would

have it, the door was thrown open, and in all the dignity of his immaculate evening dress and graceful carriage, the gentleman in question moved down the room. The two who had been wishing for him came forward eagerly, effusive in their greeting. They considered it a special honor to have his company, if only for a few minutes. They seated him at one of the banqueting-tables; they offered him the choicest that their menu cards afforded.

In vain he protested that he had not expected to be with them, and was not in the habit of taking any refreshments at so late an hour.

They urged their hospitality upon him. At least he would have a glass of the best wine the country ever produced. "Better than any you found in England," declared the worthy whom they called "Charlie," with an aside wink to his accomplice for the time being. "Some of the Governor's own importing, this is, and a little ahead of anything we have ever had in this country before. Any way, the Governor thinks so, and he's a good judge." And Mr. Palmer, who rarely drank in public, who never drank anywhere to excess, holding himself in too high esteem to permit anything to dethrone his mental powers, yet fell into the snare thus rapidly laid for his dignified feet, graciously received the goblet presented to his hands and touched the wine to his lips, intending to take only a sip or two, according to his

custom in society, just to please these rollicking fellows who were bent on playing host to him.

But it was rare wine, indeed; unlike any which Mr. Palmer, who did not pride himself on being a connoisseur in these matters, had ever tasted. The first few swallows seemed to awaken within him a strange, almost feverish thirst. Before he realized what he was doing, he had drained the glass; before he realized what others were doing, it had been filled again. He did not mean to empty it, he did not seem to be conscious that he was doing so; yet, when some time afterwards he arose from that table, it was with a dim consciousness of the fact that he had drank more wine than at a single sitting had ever before passed his lips, and that it was wine which had a strange power over him.

It was growing late. The clock directly opposite him had tolled the hour of eleven some time before; and there was now recalled to his confused mind the fact that somewhere was a lady waiting for him.

The boys watched him out of the room in ill-concealed delight.

"Isn't that a lark?" asked Charlie, slapping the shoulder of his friend. "The fellow actually staggers. You see he isn't used to that kind of wine. It isn't the kind that they offer 'straight' in polite society, but it suits his palate for all that. The old fellow would better look out, sharp as he

thinks he is. If he is as fond of that sort of stuff as appeared to-night, he will have to steer clear of it pretty soon, or find himself in real downright trouble one of these days. Upon my word, I would give something to find what Elsie Chilton will say to him to-night."

"It is rather mean on her," replied his companion; "he doesn't half-know what he is about."

"Oh! he will know what he is about well enough as soon as he gets to the street; the cool night air will revive him. But he won't talk very straight I fancy, and he may stagger a little, now and then. These girls who are fighting the liquor business, are so out and out scared at the sight of a man whose breath smells of liquor, that I don't know as she'll go home with him at all. This is the jolliest April fool time I have had in years."

They were not friends, those young men. They were not even sharpers. They were just good-hearted; in the main, commonplace, wreckless, foolhardy fellows, who had made the least of their opportunities in life; who were sometimes ashamed of it, and sometimes repentant; but too weak, or, at least, up to this point in their lives, controlled by motives and influences too weak to keep them steered in the right direction. The most of them were going quite swiftly to ruin; but they were doing it in a fashionable way. They were all society young men. They were all well-dressed, and the sons of fathers who had

reasonably good bank accounts ; and they were all fellows who in their graver moments would not have been guilty even of the intrigues to which the gentlemanly Aleck Palmer stooped. But as they felt towards midnight on this the evening of their annual supper, they were all capable of joining in hilarious laughter over the probable discomfiture of their victim !

" Victim " he certainly was. The more surely so that he did not fully realize his condition. That he felt dizzy and bewildered, and for the moment did not quite know which way to turn, or just what he was expected to do, was apparent to him ; but the cause thereof was already a confusing memory in his mind.

" It was so insufferably hot in that room," he said, " I don't see how those fellows stand it !" and he tugged at the light overcoat which he had put on to go out into the evening air, as he stumbled and fairly felt his way up the stairs to the hall. He did not need to go all the way up. At the head of the stairs, wrapped for her walk, and evidently waiting was Miss Chilton ; who as she saw him approach, turned to the janitor : " Thank you, William, you can turn out the lights now ; my friend has come. I am sorry to have kept you after the others were gone."

Then she ran swiftly down the stairs to Mr. Palmer. " It is much later than I had imagined we would be detained," she said ; " I am afraid my

father will be anxious. It is very unfortunate that he should have been called away on this particular evening."

Mr. Palmer's very first uttered sentence, although he tried to make it as polite as possible, sent terror into the heart of his companion.

Perhaps few young women of her age and position in life had thought more about the sin of drunkenness and the curse of alcoholism than had Elsie Chilton. Yet it happened that so far in her experience she had never come into personal contact with a man who was under the influence of liquor; never until at the moment when she realized that, very near the hour of midnight, she was walking through a comparatively deserted street, her sole protector being a man so far advanced toward drunkenness that he actually staggered as they walked; and his words were so thick and unnatural as to be hardly recognizable! The outer door of the great hall had closed upon them before Elsie had made this terrible discovery. She had heard the click of the lock, and the deaf old janitor turn the ponderous key. She knew that by this time he was up three flights of stairs, in a back room where he spent his nights; there was scarcely a possibility of making him hear; and the private residences on either side of the street, were, so far as she could see, closed and dark. This portion of the city world seemed to retire early. Moreover, it was a street with

which she was unfamiliar, so far as the residents were concerned; it seemed to her almost impossible to appeal to them for help. What could she say? And, for the matter of that, how could she explain her movements to the stumbling man who had her hand resting on his arm?

She had been the very last person to leave the concert hall; indeed, had been greatly annoyed because she had been obliged to keep the old janitor waiting; while along with her annoyance had been a feeling of surprise that so fastidious a gentleman as Aleck Palmer should consume the extreme limit of the time set, before returning to see if she were ready! She told herself that he must have been detained, but that it was certainly an extremely awkward situation, and one in which she would take care that she was not caught again.

At that time she had no idea in what a terrible way she had been caught. Thoroughly unfamiliar, as I said, with intoxication, she was even more frightened than she would have been had she known that there was a probability that Aleck Palmer, unsteady and silly though he was, would succeed, after all, in getting her safely to her father's house. She could not be sure but that he would fall in a drunken stupor on the street, as she had heard of men doing. Or, even worse than that, grow insane with liquor and commit some terrible deed, as she had heard too often of others doing

Carrying on this distressing train of thought, looking right and left about her, wondering what had become of all the policemen, wondering if she should appeal to him should she happen to discover one; torn by a thousand conflicting terrors she yet moved on.

It seemed unaccountable that the streets should be so deserted, yet it was one of private residences only; occupied by a class of persons who lived busy lives all day, and when nothing special in the way of business or entertainment kept them up at night, retired as early as they could.

Suddenly she heard swift footsteps on a side street, whose corner they were passing; a man's footsteps, coming rapidly. Should she appeal to him for protection? Could she do that to a stranger? How could she tell but that he might be one who would put her in greater danger than she was even now!

If it only could be some one whom she had seen before!

Then this terribly frightened girl sent up a swift cry to her Father in heaven to tell her what to do.

Meanwhile Aleck Palmer stumbled along as best he could; dizzy, half-blinded, with a strange stupor stealing over him, he yet struggled with thick speech and bewildered ideas to entertain his companion; dimly conscious the while that he was for some reason not making so good an appearance as usual.

Elsie made no answer whatever to his silly attempts at conversation; but this he did not appear to notice, and maundered on. Meantime the swift-coming feet had turned the corner and were gaining on them; and Elsie Chilton, if she lives to be a hundred years old, will never forget the thrill, both of relief and of shame, which she felt when a low, but distinctly recognizable voice said:

"Do not be frightened, Miss Chilton, I am close behind you; or will you have me call a carriage?"

"O, no!" she said, shuddering with the terror which the thought of his leaving the street to call anybody or anything brought upon her. "Do not leave me for a moment."

"I will not," said Earle Mason. "Do not be frightened. There is really nothing to fear now."

CHAPTER XIX.

MIDNIGHT.

ALECK PALMER'S thick brain caught the words: "Do not leave me for a moment." In his bewildered mental condition he appropriated them of course; and it seemed to him entirely proper to respond to so eager an appeal as that.

"Course I won't!" he said, with a slow, offensive drawl, which was as unlike the fastidious gentleman as human speech could possibly be. "I'll never leave you again; you and I belong to each other. I always knew it; and I always meant it. I was just giving you a little punishment, you know; I didn't expect it to last as long as it did; but I knew it would come out all right in the end, and you see it has. You've learned now to do as I say, and it's all settled as fast as a ceremony could make it; and I'm willing to have the ceremony any time; it can't be too quick for me."

It was not the way in which Aleck Palmer had intended to offer again his heart and hand to this young girl. He had planned, almost to the details of speech and surroundings, how this should be

done ; and had decided but a few days ago that it would not be necessary for him to wait very long. Indeed, his prospective father-in-law's affairs made it necessary that matters should be settled beyond the possibility of a mistake. But no part of his carefully conceived plan had included a midnight scene like this. It is true that he only dimly realized what he was saying or where he was ; but he knew fairly well who his companion was, and had an exulting feeling that she had appealed to him, as he had felt all along that she ought to do. As this thought lingered with him he laughed over it, the silliest possible laugh, and said again with that sickening drawl :

"I thought I'd bring you to your senses, though it took a long time. But you needn't be afraid now ; I never'll leave you again. It's a stupid life without you. Say, Elsie, this contract ought to be signed and sealed with a kiss, oughtn't it ? Right here and now, if it is on the street ! "

He gave an unsteady lurch toward her, which attention Elsie received with a little scream, and a sudden jerking of her hand away from the arm on which it had hitherto rested, because she had been afraid of consequences should she attempt to remove it.

At that instant Earle Mason's resolution was taken. Stepping suddenly between the two, he thrust one strong arm through the half-drunken man's, offering his other silently to Elsie, and

said, in a friendly, matter-of-course tone, "Good-evening, my friend; you are not feeling well, I see. Allow me to give you a little assistance."

Mr. Palmer's sudden lurch forward had brought on such overpowering dizziness and such a sense of utter bewilderment, that he did not even recognize the man who had stepped between them. Truth to tell, the unusual quantity, as well as the unusual quality of the liquor which he had been drinking, was beginning to benumb his perceptions to such a degree that he felt only a sense of relief in the fact that somebody had appeared whose arm seemed to have strength to hold him from falling. He muttered something incoherently about being "distressingly dizzy," and very grateful for 'sistance in his plans; guessed that "be-between us we will g-get the l-la-lady home all right; he had promised not to leave her again." Then he subsided into silence, and leaned more and more heavily against the young man who had undertaken the task of saving both him and his companion from publicity as much as possible. He spoke low and rapidly to Elsie now.

"Can you bear up, Miss Chilton, until we reach your home? We are almost at your corner. I know people in these houses; the second house from this, for instance, is lighted on the third floor. You might ring there, and I could assure you protection, while I take care of this man. He is incapable of reaching home alone."

"O, no! no!" Elsie answered earnestly. "I can get home if you can take care of him. Isn't this terrible?"

"Do not be frightened," he said, soothingly. "I can get him home without any difficulty."

"But, Mr. Mason, he is leaning against you with all his weight! You are almost carrying him. Is he unconscious? Will he fall, do you think?"

"I do not fear it. He is under the influence of liquor, Miss Chilton, and is falling into a sort of stupor; but it is not unconsciousness, and he is helping himself considerably. I think he has been the victim of a practical joke of some sort."

Angry and indignant as he was, Earle Mason's conscience obliged him to speak those last words. He knew perfectly well that such a condition as this was not habitual to Aleck Palmer. Of course he told himself that the fellow had been victimized in a way which could overtake no man who was not in the habit of using intoxicants of some sort on occasion; yet nevertheless he must have been led by something besides his love for liquor into his present condition and position.

Elsie made no reply, but in her heart she recognized the true nobility of the man, who even under such circumstances, could find a word of apology or explanation to offer for a fellow-man.

"And one whom he does not admire," she said to herself. "I know he neither admires nor

approves of Mr. Palmer. Oh! can I ever cease to be thankful that it was he who came to my rescue to-night? yet can I ever cease to be humiliated before him by the thought that I needed rescue? That I should have to do with people who could by any possibility of accident, bring upon me such humiliation and terror!"

The city clock tolled slowly and solemnly the hour of midnight as Earle Mason, leaving one companion sitting stupidly on the lower step, guided the other up to her father's door and rang the bell.

"What will you do?" she said hurriedly while they waited. "What can you do with him?"

"I will whistle for that policeman on the corner below, and tell him to send me a carriage; then I will accompany the gentleman to his rooms and see that he is comfortable. He has undoubtedly been victimized. It is the first of April, you remember; the time when fools consider it respectable to play all sorts of practical jokes. I strongly suspect that this is one of them."

"Then it is too terrible!" Elsie said, her face, which had been burning with humiliation, growing suddenly pale; "then everybody is in danger. If he is a victim, my father could be victimized; Mr. Remington — you, Mr. Mason. Is it so that everybody is in danger from this curse?"

"Hardly!" he said, his eyes flashing. "You have mentioned certain men whom it would be

very difficult to make the victims of a practical joke of this sort. Remember that one who never touches light wines of any kind, at any time or in any place, would hardly be persuaded to try a new variety."

Just then the key of the Chilton door turned in its lock, and the master of the house threw open his door, and received the grave and courteous bow of his daughter's attendant with an astonished stare.

"Mr. Mason came to my rescue, papa," exclaimed Elsie, her voice trembling with excitement. "But for him I do not know how I could have reached home at all. I will not try to thank you, Mr. Mason; you have not time to hear thanks to-night."

"Her companion was taken suddenly ill," explained Earle Mason gravely, following the amazed and horrified glance of Mr. Chilton to the bundle of humanity on the lower step. "I will give him all proper attention. Good-night."

Then, as the door closed, Elsie heard the short, sharp whistle which she knew summoned a policeman to his aid.

It was a very silent ride which Mr. Mason and his companion took through the quiet streets of the city. When the carriage drew up before the magnificent hotel where Mr. Palmer had rooms, it was with some difficulty that he was roused sufficiently to descend the carriage steps. There

were reasons why his attendant had a very great desire to get him quietly to his room without exciting the suspicions of lookers-on. Therefore it was that he almost carried him across the pavement and up the steps to the private entrance of the hotel, while only appearing to support him. To a porter who came promptly forward he said :

"Find Mr. Palmer's man for me, please, without delay. He has been taken suddenly ill, and should go at once to his room. It is an attack of dizziness accompanied by faintness; tell his man to make all possible haste."

He came down the stairs alone in a very short space of time, having had a realizing sense of the fact that the utmost which needed to be done for Mr. Palmer was to put him to bed and let him alone; thus giving him a chance to sleep off the effects of the poisons, whatever they were, which he had swallowed. A number of habitués of the hotel, acquaintances of Mr. Palmer, gathered around him with eager questions, their faces full of concern.

"Is it a serious attack, do you think, Mr. Mason?"

"Like apoplexy, is it not? though Palmer isn't the build of a man whom one would expect to see overtaken in that way."

"Too much brain work," said another; "a man who carries such varied business interests as he does, and works day and night for them, is bound

to break, sooner or later. I have warned him a number of times."

"Yes, and he has had heavy afflictions to weigh him down," explained a third; "his nervous system is all worn out. Was it a sudden attack, Mason? Was he taken on the street?"

"I met him on the street," answered Mr. Mason briefly, "and saw that he was — suffering. He is very quiet now, and I think needs absolute rest more than anything else. May I suggest that his friends take care that he shall not be disturbed by any callers to-night? His man understands just what to do for him." Then he broke away from more questions which he saw were ready for him, and went out to his waiting carriage. Having given the order to be taken to his rooms, Earle Mason threw himself wearily back among the cushions, and gave himself up to some of the bitterest thoughts with which his heart had ever struggled. It was not possible to get away from the belief that the old intimacy between Aleck Palmer and Elsie Chilton had been renewed. How else could he account for the fact of their being alone together on the streets at midnight? How else, indeed, account for the fact that they seemed to be together constantly? Must he, after all that he had borne, and after all his gratitude because of what she had escaped, sit dumbly by and see that fearful sacrifice made at last? What could it mean? How could one account for human hearts?

How was it possible for a girl like Elsie Chilton to be drawn to a man like Aleck Palmer! Would it be possible to her, after this night? Yes, he told himself despairingly. "If she has given her faith to him again, it will be possible for her to forgive him, and to accept his plea that he was victimized. Well, I must be true to my conscience, I believe he was. He is too wary a man, too thoroughly a surface gentleman, to ever walk coolly of his own choice into such peril as that. The fact that it was, probably, a practical joke must be admitted. And practical jokes are not, as a rule, repeated upon the same victim. Miss Chilton will be assured that such a calamity could not occur again; she will believe him. She will even believe that for her sake he will give up the occasional sipping of wine. I do not! I do not believe there is man enough in Aleck Palmer to give up even that much for her sake. But there is suavity enough to him to make her think he will. As for her father, I am afraid he would marry her to a fiend who would save his fortune to him! Oh, to be able to do something to save her! How can Jesus Christ bear it to see human lives wrecked that he knows might be saved if only they would!"

What comfort could be derived from the thought that he had done his best for the man, Mr. Mason took to himself. He had been sorely tempted to call a policeman and leave the fastidious gentleman in his hands to be done with as he would; but he

sternly upbraided himself for this temptation; such an act would not be in accordance with his principles of Christian living. If he could conceive of himself in such a situation as Aleck Palmer was to-night, and be able to decide how he should want himself treated, it was manifestly his duty to give like treatment to his fallen brother-man. Moreover, there was another motive which must not for a moment be put in the background. Miss Chilton's name must be shielded as much as possible from the public; Miss Chilton's feelings must be thought of; therefore Earle Mason had done his best.

It will be readily conceded that Aleck Palmer had put himself in an embarrassing situation. No one could have realized this more fully than he did, the next morning. He lay still and considered the matter as well as he could, with a throbbing headache, and with every nerve of his body keenly alive to pain. What had happened to him the night before? Who had been his companions? What had he said? done? How had he finally reached his home? In his mind was a most confused disorder of many people, flashing lights, music, wine, noise; and mingling with these a strange sensation of having been associated some way with Miss Chilton, and with some one else; some one who annoyed him, vexed him, yet some one who had served him. In vain he tried to steady his memory and make a plain statement of

the case to his critical self. The last distinct memory he had, was of sitting in an overheated room in company with some hilarious young men who had annoyed him by their familiarity, and jarred his fastidious taste in many ways. Yet he had remembered that he was their guest, and that he meant, in the near future, to ask certain things of them which would make it advisable for them to be on very friendly terms; therefore he must accept of their hospitality. He remembered raising a wine glass to his lips, intending to take the customary sips which he allowed himself in public. He remembered that it had a strange, yet delicious taste and odor; and he remembered clearly nothing more. But the very vagueness of the images which haunted him, and the possibilities wrapped in them, seemed to set his brain on fire.

The door opened very softly and Jenkins, his well trained and obsequious attendant, came in on tiptoe. "You are awake, sir?" he said, in a relieved tone; "and I hope you find yourself better this morning? I was extremely anxious about you last night, and so was your friend."

"What was the matter?" asked Mr. Palmer, suddenly resolved upon putting on a bold face. "Did I have a fit, or a fainting turn, or what happened? I find I have no recollection of anything beyond the fact that I was suddenly taken ill."

"Yes, sir," said Jenkins eagerly, "and that is about all we know about it, sir. The gentleman

who brought you here in a carriage said that he met you on the street, and saw that you were suffering very much, so he called a carriage and brought you home, and helped to get you to your room. He was very kind and thoughtful, sir, and as anxious about you as possible."

Jenkins had his own reasons for believing that Mr. Mason's version of the story would do no harm.

"Who was the gentleman?" was Mr. Palmer's next question.

"It was Mr. Mason, sir, the lawyer who has his rooms on Court Street near the Exchange."

Had Mr. Palmer been in the habit of whistling, and been in a sufficiently cheerful frame of mind to indulge, a short, sharp note expressive of astonishment mingled with several other feelings would have been in order here. Had he even been in the habit of swearing, he thought it might be a relief. As it was, he simply lay perfectly still and considered the matter for some minutes; then he called for a cup of coffee, drank it eagerly, sent Jenkins to a drug store near at hand to procure an opiate which he was in the habit of taking when attacked with these peculiar and blinding headaches, and, in the course of another hour or two, arose, made a careful toilette, and had his immediate future planned out before him.

In the first place, the rôle he was to play was evidently that of an invalid. Jenkins, upon being

cross-questioned, furnished incidents which proved as much ; even before the arrival of several cards, expressing the compliments of certain gentlemen friends who boarded in the same house, and the hope that he was better this morning.

"It was a very sudden attack, but one not unusual with me," he explained carelessly, to one of the most talkative of the set whom he admitted to his room. "At least, it had not been unusual of late, since I have been so overworked and overburdened. I ought to be more careful about late hours ; but various unexpected engagements held me prisoner last night, after an extremely fatiguing day spent in perplexing business. I remember struggling very hard with a feeling of languor that was creeping over me ; bringing all my will-power to bear upon the effort to get home without creating any sensation, but it seems I didn't succeed ; it is well that I fell among friends."

"Yes, it is indeed," his companion answered heartily. "The young man who attended you was extremely solicitous for your welfare ; gave his orders like one who knew how, and even took the trouble to assure some of us, who were anxious to go in and see what we could do for your comfort, that you must not be disturbed ; he was confident that rest was what you needed."

"He was right," said Aleck Palmer, passing his hand across his forehead, and letting a grave smile hover on his face for a moment. "He was right

in that respect certainly; though I thank you all the same for your intended kindness. I should have disliked to alarm my friends needlessly; these attacks are not serious, I think; they are simply annoying. I have never even consulted a physician for them, though I have thought I would. Still I believe that, as my friends say, a few hours of rest is the best medicine for me. I shall remain quietly in my room to-day, and not attempt to transact much business; but I shall expect by to-morrow to be myself again."

And then his caller, feeling himself dismissed, went away, leaving Aleck Palmer to attend to the business of writing such a letter as he could, to Miss Elsie Chilton.

If he could only recall the conversation which passed between them the night before! If he could but remember what he said just before the time came when he could converse no longer, he fancied that it would greatly relieve his mind! But search his memory as relentlessly as he would, it refused to recall anything distinctly. After a while he abandoned the hope of knowing. Certainly he could not ask the lady herself to give him a detailed programme of the evening, and probably no one else knew much about it; unless, indeed, Earle Mason had appeared some time before he became unable to converse!

"Probably that fellow could give me some interesting facts if he chose," said Mr. Palmer, rising

and walking thoughtfully toward the window. For a time he revolved in his mind the propriety of sending for Mr. Mason; of receiving him cordially, gratefully, as one who had done him a favor; of putting on a very frank air and informing him that he had been overcome with a kind of liquor to which he was totally unaccustomed; overcome in a manner which he did not in the least understand, and that he was exceedingly grateful to him for the altogether friendly courtesies which he had shown. And then to ask him boldly to tell him to what degree he had made an idiot of himself before the unconscious stage came upon him. But the more he reflected upon this line of action, the more averse he became to it.

It seemed a very cruel Providence that, of all the men in the city, Earle Mason should have been singled out to perform a service of this sort to him! Truth to tell, Aleck Palmer would rather kick the young man downstairs at this moment than thank him for anything.

CHAPTER XX.

PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS.

THE truth was Mr. Palmer looked upon Earle Mason as the one who had been the chief cause of most of his serious troubles with Miss Chilton, and as one who was trying now, by every means in his power, if her father was to be believed, to secure that lady's fortune. Mr. Chilton professed to believe that he cared for nothing outside of that.

Could Aleck Palmer stoop to thank such an one, or to hold any conversation with him? He could not deny that Mason seemed to have treated him like a gentleman. Treated him, he told himself, in a very different manner from what he should have done had the circumstances been reversed; and he fell to wondering what possible motive the young man could have had for such careful planning, and such careful explanation as he had evidently given. Was he really such a simpleton as not to understand the nature of the illness? This question passed through Mr. Palmer's mind and was promptly negatived. Whatever else

Earle Mason might be, he was certainly not a simpleton. But people did not act without motives in this world, and Mr. Palmer, thrown off the main track, set himself steadfastly to studying what they were in this case.

Be it remembered that he knew nothing about that highest of all motives, the Christlike rule of living: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you." He simply would have sneered had any one presented to him such a motive. He had heard the words of course; he even had a vague impression that certain women might be trying to order their lives after such an ideal pattern, but that men, business men, successful business men such as Earle Mason was becoming, ever gave serious heed to such an unbusiness-like admonition as this, Mr. Palmer did not believe. He stared thoughtfully out of the window, and planned and rejected theory after theory to account for the treatment he had received at this man's hands.

Suddenly his brows grew darker, but the look of perplexity left his face. He believed he had solved the mystery; that he was the victim of a practical joke, or of a practical meanness of some sort, he did not doubt for a moment. No ordinary glass of wine, such as was in common use in polite society, would have had such a strange effect upon him. Somebody had deliberately planned to disgrace him in the eyes of the woman with whom his name was so much associated; and

among all the persons with whom he was acquainted, none would have had any motive for so doing except Earle Mason himself. The moment this thought flashed upon his mind, he called himself a dumb-headed idiot for not having realized the situation from the first. Earle Mason plotting his ruin, had called to his aid a couple of half-intoxicated fellows, who, for the sake of having what they were pleased to call fun, were prepared to do anything that sharper brains than theirs could plan. It was all as clear as sunlight; and a more fiercely angry man than Aleck Palmer, as he thought of and carefully planned out the steps which his enemy had taken to humiliate him, it would have been difficult to find.

It all seemed increasingly plain to him. This would account for the fact that Mason, of all persons in the city, should happen to be the one walking on that particular street at that particular hour of the night. It would account for his exceeding care in apparently shielding his victim from publicity. For what could look better, if the story came to light, or make it more improbable in the eyes of the world that he had anything to do with the disgrace? Mr. Palmer felt that the scheme had been only too successful. He cared for the eyes of the world, it is true, but little in comparison with what he cared for the eyes of one young woman, before whom he had been, he knew not how deeply, humiliated. Fiercer and fiercer

raged the storm of anger in his heart, and before he could leave the subject to attend to a matter of more immediate importance, he could not forbear trying to plan some way emphatic, yet so far as he should have a hand in it dignified method of revenge.

But before the morning was quite gone he realized the importance of sending some sort of a communication to Miss Chilton; and necessarily a humiliating and painful communication it must be, look at it from what point of view he could. It required hours to write anything that he was willing to send. More than a dozen sheets of paper were torn into small fragments, thrown into the empty grate, then carefully gathered and laboriously burned by the aid of matches from the safe, before he finished one, which, with a long-drawn sigh, he pronounced the best that he could do.

In the interval between the tearing and burning, it seemed to him that he tramped miles up and down his room. But the letter, when it was finally completed, was certainly a marvel of skill. In spite of the extremely undignified circumstances by which he found himself surrounded, Mr. Palmer had contrived to be dignified on paper. He explained that both he and she had been the victims — he could not call it of a practical joke; but the fools' day of the year had been chosen to lend color to a bit of practical villainy carefully planned and arranged by one who had an object

in view, and had succeeded but too well. Miss Chilton must not for a moment suppose that such disastrous consequences followed the sipping of three or four swallows of wine in the ordinary way, as was customary among gentlemen when at a public banquet. This was a deeply laid plot to get him to do what he was never in the habit of doing; and he wanted to assure her that he was no more responsible for what he did or said while in the condition which had followed than an insane man would have been, could he have escaped from a lunatic asylum and taken a walk with her. At the same time, as was usual in underhanded crimes, he, the victim, must be the sufferer.

It was his terrible sorrow that he had brought to her, this friend of so many years, standing, embarrassment, pain and humiliation. It is true he had no recollection of what had taken place, after he was successfully poisoned, but whatever it was, must have caused her great pain; and so great was his grief over this, that he would not on any account think of intruding himself upon her until he received from her a word of assurance that she understood the situation and exonerated him from intentional blame.

Miss Chilton read this letter attentively, not without a slightly curling lip over some of its sentences. It was so manifest that the writer considered himself only as a victim, and in no sense of the word a sinner. Yet it seemed to her she

could hear the throb of indignation in Earle Mason's tone as he explained that there were men who could not be made victims of such practical jokes as these.

On the whole, Mr. Palmer did not succeed in appearing at his best, even in this carefully-worded letter; but he succeeded in giving Elsie Chilton a perplexed hour, when she tried to decide how to reply to him.

If she only need make no reply whatever! But that would not be Christian, would not be even decent. She must not be so indignant that she could not accept an explanation. Truth to tell, she was not so bitterly indignant as might be supposed. She had been frightened and humiliated, but now that the terror was over, and the first sense of humiliation was passing away, she was too utterly indifferent to the cause of her terror to feel bitter indignation.

"I wish I might write to him that I would forgive frankly and fully all the terror and disgust he caused me, on condition that he would be so kind as never to let me see his face again!" she said, with an impatient frown. Then she too repeated the tearing up of note paper in a vain attempt to satisfy herself with a reply. It was ready at last, and read after this fashion:

"Miss Chilton regrets, of course, the painful and humiliating experiences connected with the last evening which was spent in Mr. Palmer's company, and regrets exceedingly that the habits of

all her acquaintances are not such as to make it impossible for them to fall victims to practical jokes of this character, perpetrated by evil men. At the same time she recognizes the fact that there is no reason whatever why she should presume to dictate to Mr. Palmer, or suggest any change in his manner of life; and begs that he will not consider it necessary to think of her in this connection, or to make any further explanation to her."

This was not at all satisfactory to the writer. She would like to have spoken much more plainly. She held her pen poised for several minutes, revolving in her mind a sentence which she would like to add; but deference to her father's strangely-complicated business relations with this gentleman held her in check.

Several days passed, during which time Elsie was absorbed by a slight illness of her Aunt Emily, and the added household and social duties which such illness involved upon her part, and saw nothing of either Mr. Palmer, Mr. Mason, or her friends at the Remington Manse. Neither, to her surprise, had she been called upon by her father to give any more detailed account of her humiliating experience than she had given, somewhat coldly, and under the influence of strong excitement, on the night of its occurrence.

"Father," she had said, the moment the door closed upon Mr. Mason, "I trust I shall never hereafter be compelled to accept the attentions of a person of such doubtful character that it may require the assistance of a policeman to get him safely home. Aleck Palmer is intoxicated!"

After which astounding statement she had turned and run quickly up the stairs. She had expected to be called to account, to be questioned and cross-questioned; but not a word had her father spoken to her on the subject; and he was more than exceptionally kind and thoughtful of her comfort. Indeed, several times she was greatly touched by a tender word or two from him, and an unwonted caress. Undoubtedly they would have impressed her differently had she known that her father had been in close consultation with Aleck Palmer, and was acting in accordance with his distinctly expressed suggestions. That gentleman was biding his time. He had resolved to let perhaps several weeks pass without making the slightest attempt to see Elsie. She should have time to recover from the feeling of indignation which he knew, from the tone of her letter, must possess her, and to grow used to the fact that he was simply a victim to some one whom he had been unfortunate enough to make his enemy by being superior to him.

During this time he was by no means idle. He might almost be said to be living for the purpose of tracing to its depths the plot of which he believed Earle Mason was the foundation. He had spoken very plainly to Mr. Chilton on the subject, assuring that gentleman that he had reason to know that he was correct in his surmise. But at the same time he had taken great care to impress

it upon the father, that it would be by no means wise to report this state of things to Miss Chilton.

"In the first place, it is very unnecessary," he said, with a philanthropic air. "She naturally looks upon the man as her protector. Moreover, he is a friend of her very special friends, the Remingtons, and any reflections against his character would, through them, hurt her. In due time it will, of course, be necessary to let her know what sort of person her friends are trusting. But faith in human nature ought not to be shaken in the minds of young people, where it is possible to avoid it. I would rather your daughter should think well of her acquaintances as long as she can. And you will oblige me very much, Mr. Chilton, by not mentioning that person's name to her. There are other reasons also for this request, which I may make plainer to you in the future."

So it came to pass that for several weeks the various people who during the last few months had seen a great deal of one another, were quite isolated. Mrs. Remington, on her part, was housed and absorbed, for little John had the measles; and Earle Mason, while he came and went as usual, saw nothing of Elsie Chilton, and heard nothing of her, and refrained from asking any questions. Such a state of things could not last long.

Aunt Emily rallied slowly from her illness, but the day came when she was downstairs in her usual place at table; and Elsie announced herself

relieved from a burden of responsibility, and declared that she was going to spend the afternoon and evening with Fern Redpath, provided her father could be absolutely certain that he would call for her, or, failing in this, if he would see to it that Mike and the carriage were in attendance.

They were at lunch when this statement was made, and Mr. Chilton had given no reply. But a short time thereafter he called to his daughter from the library and closed the door upon her as she came in.

"I shall have to reconstruct some of your plans for the evening, my dear," he said. "This is precisely the evening when it will not be possible for me to get away. There is a very important meeting of railroad directors to-night. Moreover Mike is sick and Joe is too young a driver for me to be willing to trust you to him through city streets at night."

"Oh! very well," said Elsie promptly, "I will wait until some other time then, papa. I had forgotten that Mike was sick."

"No," said Mr. Chilton kindly, "that will not be necessary, daughter. You have been housed so much of late, I do not like to disarrange your plans. I will tell you how I can manage, my dear. Palmer has to be at the directors' meeting, too; but he is a younger man than I, and does not hold so important an office. He said he would have his carriage there, and would bring me home after

the meeting. Now I can send him around at any hour you name for you, and you can pick me up on your way back; I shall probably be able to get ready by the time you return. It is quite a drive out to Redpath's."

He spoke quite rapidly, and avoided looking at his daughter's face. He was drawing on his gloves as he talked, and had buttoned the last one with his closing sentence. Had he looked at Elsie he would have seen that there was a strange flash in her eyes, and that her lips were set in a way which meant determination.

"So that will be all right, dear," he added with alacrity, and was making all speed for the door when his daughter spoke:

"Father, excuse me; I must detain you a moment. That is very far from right, sir. I can change my plans without being discommoded in the least; to-morrow or the next day will answer my purpose quite as well as this evening; but as for being called for by Mr. Palmer, and riding home in his carriage, I must be excused. In view of what has so recently occurred, I decline to accept that, or any other attention from him."

Mr. Chilton took several steps back into the room, and made a visible effort to control his nerves and speak gently.

"My daughter, I am astonished and grieved! This is the last exhibition I should have expected from one of your profession. Mr. Palmer was the

victim of plotters, or rather of a set of tools under a plotter who is envious of his good fortune. It was very trying, of course, but is certainly no reason why his friends should cast him off, or stand upon dignity with him. You surely understand the situation, Elsie?"

"I understand quite enough of it, papa. I am not angry at Mr. Palmer, nor can I be said to have cast him off; that his habits are such as to make it possible for him to have become the victim of such persons, I should think would be very trying to his friends; but there is no sense in which I can be said to be one of them. I have tried to be polite and respectful to Mr. Palmer, papa, solely for your sake; not because I admire him. He is not the kind of person whom I should choose for a friend. I do not enjoy his society, and this simply affords me an opportunity which I have wished for to make it plain to you, and to him, that any attentions he might offer are disagreeable to me. I fully understand," she went on hurriedly, seeing her father about to interrupt her, "that he does not consider himself as offering attentions to me. Had I not realized this, I should not have accepted his courtesies heretofore. I know that circumstances have thrown us together, and that they were not of his planning, or desiring. They merely happened. But owing to his business relations with you, the happenings were too frequent to be pleasant. I do not like to be the

subject of gossiping tongues, papa, nor do I like to put myself in a position where it will be possible for the humiliations which I experienced a few weeks ago ever to occur again. Mr. Palmer and I live in different worlds, and are content to do so; and what I want to ask of you, papa, is that you will help me; will see to it that I am not compromised in any such ways again. Of course, absorbed with business cares as you are, you do not realize what it is to me. I know you would shield me if you did. But really and truly it is so unpleasant that I cannot think of having any more of it."

Mr. Chilton walked to the window and looked out. His mind was torn by conflicting theories. He could not decide whether to tell his daughter that she was a simpleton; that any young woman with common sense would know that Aleck Palmer was as deeply interested in her as he had ever been in his life, and that he made a great many of the complications of business for the sole purpose of getting himself thrown in her society; or whether to tell her that the complications of business were so great and so serious as to make it absolutely necessary for her to be friendly to Aleck Palmer; to marry him, indeed, in order to save her father from financial overthrow; or whether to assume the roll of indignant parent, and assure her that as his daughter she would be obliged to treat his friends with courtesy and re-

spect; to accept their attentions, and go and come with them as convenience might demand, without any absurd talk about "compromising herself," or making herself the subject of gossip.

These were three, and distinct lines of action, and he found himself at the moment utterly unable which of them to follow out. Elsie helped him to a decision. He was standing with his side-face towards her. She noticed for the first time that he was growing very gray, and that there were certain wrinkles about his face which she had not observed before; and when he turned a little as if about to speak, she noted the troubled, anxious look in his eyes. It all came over her with a sudden sense of pain that her father was growing old, faster than it seemed to her there was any necessity for; that he was weighing himself down with anxiety, paralyzing his higher and better life with heavy and perplexing cares, such as it seemed to her he might avoid.

"Dear papa," she said gently, "I wish you would untangle yourself from all this perplexing extra business that you seem to have taken lately. Why do you wear yourself out with so many and varied interests? Haven't we money enough to live a quiet pleasant life together without your being so burdened? I would rather have ever so much less money, and more of you. I wish you would give up all this new business that is connected with Mr. Palmer, and just do your own

regular work as you used to do. We had a great deal happier times when I was a young girl, papa, than we have ever had since. Couldn't you give a little less time to business, and a little more to me?"

Mr. Chilton turned toward her with his eyes dim with unshed tears. He knew now which line of argument he would take.

CHAPTER XXI.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

"COME and sit beside me, daughter," he said gently, "and let us have a little talk. You and I do not have much time for each other. This is a hurrying, wearing world, Elsie; I have always found it so, and of late years more than ever."

He had taken a seat on the wide, old-fashioned lounge, and drawn his daughter to him. One arm was thrown around her, and his other hand played with the fingers which lay idly in her lap.

"I had not thought to appeal to you, daughter, for sympathy, or to confide in you sufficiently to make you understand my perplexities; but I believe I will; I feel sure I can trust you."

Then followed a careful and somewhat detailed account of his business perplexities, so far as Mr. Chilton himself understood them. Just how he had been led to make grave business mistakes just when his affairs began to get into a strange entanglement, that seemed to become more and more bewildering as he studied them, he could

not himself explain. There were matters which he frankly admitted that he did not understand; this much, however, was clear to him, and he made it very clear to his daughter, that his business interests were inextricably mixed with those of Aleck Palmer; and that while he had grown poorer, Mr. Palmer had manifestly grown richer, and was the one man in all Mr. Chilton's extensive business acquaintance who could rescue him from imminent peril.

Elsie's face had grown momently paler as she listened. She had a very clear brain for business when she chose to give it close attention, and nothing was plainer to her than that her father was, in a sense, in Mr. Palmer's power. Or at least that that gentleman had it in his power to befriend him in a way which would save many thousands of dollars, if he chose to do so. It was humiliating to be dependent upon Mr. Palmer, yet Elsie could see that time and patience were really all her father needed. "Just a helping hand, to tide him over present difficulties," was his pathetic way of putting it.

Mr. Chilton sat in silence after having finished his story; apparently he was waiting for Elsie to speak.

"Well," she said at last, feeling the necessity for giving some response to her father's confidence, "I thank you, papa, for explaining all this to me; I think I understand some things better,

at least. You need help for a little while, and Mr. Palmer seems to be the only one who can help you. It is strange that in all your extensive business acquaintance there is no one else; but since there is not, is he willing to come to the rescue? He would not lose money by it, eventually, would he? It would be only a matter of accommodating you for a little while."

"That is all," her father answered eagerly; "I am not afraid but that I could straighten everything if I had time; but accommodations of that sort and a few thousands of ready money, mean a great deal in business, my daughter; not every man is willing to take the risk; Mr. Palmer is — for a consideration."

"For a consideration?" she repeated; "that seems strange friendship! What are his terms?"

Mr. Chilton frowned. He felt that he was making a mistake. "I do not of course mean for a consideration," he said hastily; "I mean that there are certain things upon which he depends. If there were a possibility of failure in those directions, I could not in conscience ask him for help. Elsie, it is not possible that you are so blind as not to see that you hold the same place in Mr. Palmer's heart which you used to hold; that he wants you, and no one else in this world; that his interest in your father and in your father's affairs, are simply and solely because you are your father's daughter. I had not meant to speak thus plainly

to you, but we have gotten so far that it seems impossible to retreat. The bald facts are, my daughter, that my fortune, my future prosperity, I might almost say my life, are in your hands. The question is, will you help me? I know as well as though I had heard him speak the words, that Mr. Palmer desires nothing in life so much as to become my son-in-law. Assured of that, his princely fortune would be at my disposal. He not only could, but would save me, and more than save me. He would tide me royally over this dangerous place in my affairs, and place them on such a basis that danger in the future would be impossible. All this without the loss of a dollar to himself; and yet, you can readily see how impossible it is for me to ask favors at his hands, or to receive them, when I so fully understand his intentions, unless there is a prospect, not now, of course, but that some time in the future he will be rewarded with the only thing for which he cares. The question is, Elsie, will you simply receive him as a friend? Accept the ordinary courtesies of friendship at his hand, and try to see if you cannot, sometime, give him what he wants."

Absolute silence, then, between them for several minutes. Mr. Chilton did not choose to look at his daughter's face. If he had it would have been a revelation to him. He thought she was considering the matter. What she was trying to do, was to choke down the bitter feelings tugging

at her heart, that she might answer her father as she felt that a daughter should.

At last the silence grew too much for him to endure; moreover it emboldened him. If Elsie could hesitate, she certainly could not intend an utter refusal. "I am waiting, my daughter," he said, not unkindly, but with a little tone of reproach. "Am I not to be answered at all? Time is very important to me, and I have given you a good deal of it to-day."

Then she spoke in a tone which even she scarcely recognized as her own: "Father, am I to understand that you wish to sell me, and that Mr. Palmer is the highest bidder?"

Mr. Chilton sprang up, and moved several feet away from his daughter. "What do you mean?" he asked sternly. "What have I ever said that should lead you to use such improper language as that to your father?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, if it sounds improper. What I mean is: that I thought this whole matter was distinctly settled between us long ago. If it is not, I will try to make it plain. I not only do not care for Mr. Palmer's friendship, but I do not respect him. It is not possible for me to conceive of circumstances which would make me willing to receive his attentions. Since his return home I have tried, as I said, to treat him courteously, for your sake alone. I had imagined that he was changed, that he had no interest whatever

in me; that it was for your sake he came here, else I should not have done even as much as I have towards receiving him courteously. I cannot believe it possible that you are correct in your estimate of him, but if you are, I certainly despise him more than I supposed! That a man who has so recently buried a wife can be plotting and planning for another, while he expresses in her presence the most devoted and heart-broken attachment to the one who is gone, is something scarcely conceivable; and that Aleck Palmer, of all persons on earth, should imagine for a single moment that he could ever be anything to me but an acquaintance whom I tolerate for my father's sake, is equally inconceivable. I cannot feel it possible, father, that you, knowing all that has passed, can in your serious moments desire me to receive attentions from this man. It hurts me to think so, even more than it humiliates me to think that he is planning in that way.

"Father, even though I were attached to him, could you bear to have me marry a man who had to sit on your doorstep only a few weeks ago, until a policeman was summoned to help him home?"

Mr. Chilton uttered an exclamation of disgust. "I thought that was the matter, Elsie," he said sharply. "You let your fanaticism get in the way of all your interests, and even your father must be sacrificed to it. It has been so from the first. If

I could have saved you from friendships with fanatical men and women, it would have saved your life for you. Pray, what is your profession of Christianity worth, if you cannot forgive? especially when it has been most carefully explained to you that Palmer was the victim of a villain's scheming? Is he to be cast aside as unworthy of your notice because some one succeeded in making him swallow that which he would never have done voluntarily, and so brought him to humiliation, just as was intended?"

There was an unmistakable curl of scorn upon Elsie's lips. "Papa," she said coldly, "I beg that I may not hear that excuse again. It is the weakest of all excuses. Could a man who was not in the habit of tasting a drop of liquor have been made a victim of in any such fashion? I choose to select for my friends those who are such utter fanatics on this question, that no wine glass, however small, of home-made wine, or of sweet cider, could be prepared so as to injure them, for the simple reason that they ignore the entire list, from sweet cider down. Were Mr. Palmer a gentleman of that stamp, villains might have schemed in vain."

Mr. Chilton was walking slowly back and forth through the room. He seemed to be lost in thought, and Elsie could not be sure that he had heard the last things she had said. She waited in painful doubt as to what to say next, or as to

whether, indeed, she had anything to say. At last, touched again by the gray hairs and the wrinkles on his worn face, she spoke more gently:

"Papa, let us understand each other at last. There is nothing which is right that I would not do for you. I feel sure I could willingly die to save you any more trouble, to ensure you an old age of comfort; but I could never marry any man, though he might be good and noble, simply to save my father from business losses. I could not lie, you know, and such an act would be a lie. Dear papa, I wish you would not let this matter of money weigh you down. We do not need so much of it. We could live on a great deal less, I am sure. I would be glad to do so to save you anxiety. We could live in a smaller house, and keep fewer servants, and I could sing and earn money in that way, and teach others how to sing. Papa, there are endless ways in which I can help you, if you will let me."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Chilton, in short, sharp tones; "don't talk like an idiot. There is exactly one way in which you can help me, and I have explained it to you as carefully as I knew how; humiliated myself to ask your help, and received the answer which I might have expected. Your love for your father and for your home, and for the friends you might be expected to love, has been lost in fanatical zeal for those who are nothing to you. At this moment I believe you

have more interest in the villain who plotted Mr. Palmer's ruin, than you have in any of your own station in life. Palmer had magnanimity enough to want to shield you from the knowledge, because it was so hard for young people to have to 'lose confidence in their friends.' Lose fiddlesticks! It is time you lost confidence in people not worthy of it. I am not going to be hushed into silence any longer. Let me tell you, Elsie Chilton, that it was your model of a Christian gentleman, Earle Mason, who plotted successfully for Palmer's humiliation. It did not seem to occur to him that he would involve you in the same disgrace, or perhaps he knew it would be sufficient for you if he were the rescuer. He may understand you better than the rest of us do. At any rate he planned skillfully; played the philanthropist and the magnanimous gentleman to his heart's content, I hope. His triumph will be short. Palmer has got hold of the whole chain of evidence, and in due time will produce it. You will like to appear as a witness in his favor, I presume, when the suit is brought. I warn you in time so you can get your evidence ready."

Elsie had risen from the sofa and now confronted her father, her cheeks perfectly pale, her eyes blazing with indignation; but as was usually the case when wrought up by intense excitement, she succeeded in making her voice sound, though not quite natural, yet perfectly calm; and it was

never clearer than when she said, speaking slowly, and looking steadily into her father's face:

"Father, that is an infamous lie, gotten up, I do not hesitate to believe, by Mr. Palmer himself. One who could attribute such actions as that to a gentleman like Earle Mason, would do anything. I hope it will come to trial; I shall be only too glad to appear as a witness for a true, good man. And I tell you now, father, once for all, I despise Aleck Palmer. I will not receive a call from him, nor accept any courtesies at his hands, nor even recognize him on the street as an acquaintance, from this time forth."

Then she turned and moved with dignity from the room.

The days which immediately followed this conversation were full of perplexity for Elsie Chilton. Her father, as much as one could, who in his saner moments was a gentleman, ignored her existence; that is, he spoke to her only when the proprieties of life made it absolutely necessary, and then always briefly and coldly. He immersed himself in business more deeply than ever before; the lines of care and anxiety deepened on his face. Elsie, who tried in all dutiful ways to be helpful, was never rewarded by so much as a smile; and many and bitter were the tears which she shed in her own room, as she wondered what the outcome of it all would be.

Meantime, she was not without her own

schemes, which she planned and carried out successfully. Beginning to understand her father fairly well, she judged that if he were correct in his estimate of Aleck Palmer's intentions — and the more she thought about it, the more she feared he was — he would keep his own council, and leave Mr. Palmer to find out the condition of things as best he could. This indeed was precisely what Mr. Chilton did; only intimating in response to the former's careful cross-questioning, that he feared his daughter was more "fanatical" than ever; that "the Redpath girl," as well as others of the same stamp, had in some way acquired a very great influence over her, and he feared exceedingly that it would take some time to overcome the effects of that one disastrous evening.

"The fact is, Palmer," he said, "I don't know of anything which will open Elsie's eyes conclusively, unless you can prove to her satisfaction that that rascally Mason was at the bottom of the whole affair. She has rather pinned her faith to his integrity. It would be a shock that would make her realize a good many other things, if she could understand that. How soon will you be prepared to bring the testimony connected with it before those most interested?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Palmer curtly. "I have matters in mind at present of graver importance than to undertake to prove to any lady that a

villain is a villain." And his significant tone, coupled with Mr. Chilton's own knowledge of affairs, made that gentleman sigh and turn away with an embarrassed feeling that he was in the power of the younger man, and must move and speak carefully.

A very unhappy man was Mr. Chilton during these days. He had spent a life which was rapidly verging towards sixty, with the single purpose of building up a magnificent fortune, and a business that should do honor to his sagacity and foresight. To have succeeded brilliantly for so many years, then apparently by a few bewildering turns of Fortune's wheel to be actually trembling upon the verge of bankruptcy, was a burden almost too great for such a man to carry. He tossed on his sleepless bed night after night, and studied the problem. It was growing very dark to him. He had almost given up the hope of being saved; the utmost that he could expect to do was to gain a little time by keeping Aleck Palmer in ignorance of the true state of affairs. To do him justice, he did not really want to sell his daughter; he was simply angry with her because the proposition he had made was not accepted as an honor, instead of looked upon as a sacrifice. He was more angry with the friends, or as he always called them, "the fanatics," whom he believed had brought about this state of things. He had worked himself into the belief that Earle

Mason was the most consummate hypocrite of that entire set; and he assured himself, as he tossed upon his bed, that Elsie would find he could be obstinate, too. If she persisted in her infatuation for that fellow, he would disown her as surely as his name was Chilton; not one penny of his money should that man ever have. Then he groaned as he thought how slight at present was the prospect that he would have any money with which to punish Elsie, and said aloud, "If I could only have time, and twenty thousand dollars in cash, I could straighten out the whole thing."

It seemed extraordinary to him that his affairs should be in jeopardy for so paltry a sum of money as that. Given time, he could have raised it, without exciting suspicion; but the only one who could raise it for him, without needing to ask any questions, was Aleck Palmer, and he hung back in a strangely exasperating way; and was waiting manifestly for Elsie Chilton to recover from her "ill humor," before he could decide what to do. So the days passed, and Elsie, as I said, planned too. When Mr. Palmer called, as he presently began to do again, asking for her father as heretofore, Miss Chilton, to whom his card was taken in the absence of her father, invariably sent down word as to what hour and moment the said father would be expected, and begged the gentleman to be kind enough to entertain himself in the library until that time; then he was left to his own de-

vices. If he staid to dinner, as he had on two or three occasions, at the proper moment the servant appeared with the statement that Miss Elsie begged to be excused; she was very much engaged, or she was not feeling quite well, or she had dined earlier with some friends; in short, there always appeared to be good and sufficient reasons why Miss Elsie could not be seen. She could not be caught by any scheme which her father or his friend could devise; and Aleck Palmer grew angrier every hour against those who had plotted the dastardly trick to which he laid all his misfortunes.

Nor was he by any means so successful as he expected to be in planning to bring the offenders to justice. The boys connected with the college banquet, one and all disclaimed any knowledge of the event, or complicity in it, except of course, the two whose connection with it could easily be traced; and these were so devoid of refinement as to be honestly surprised that Palmer couldn't pass it off as a good joke; "laugh over it and let it go." What was it to be overcome for a few hours, anyhow? All gentlemen knew by experience about that! Of course it wasn't agreeable to be found out by a lady, and there came in the first-of-April joke; and they laughed while they were talking about it. And then honestly declared they didn't know he would take it to heart so, or they wouldn't have done it. It was just a bit of fun. They

weren't exactly themselves of course, or they probably wouldn't have carried it out. If he wanted them to, they were willing to go to the lady and say that they had planned it, and that they had taken a glass too much probably, when they did it. That was square certainly. What more could he expect?

Then they, too, scowled and frowned, and grew angry in turn over his bitter denunciation of the whole thing, but only laughed uproariously over his insinuations that there was some one back of it all who had instigated the plot.

"Not a bit of it!" said Charlie; "bless your heart, I don't pretend to be very smart, but I am equal to a first-of-April joke I should say, without any assistance from any quarter. And that is all in life it was; man alive! what's the use of making such a row about it? If the lady in the case is reasonable at all, she will take our explanation.

"No, sir, we were not put up to it. We are not schoolboys, or rowdies for that matter, who can be hired to do dirty jobs for other folks. You forget to whom you are speaking, Palmer, upon my word."

And Palmer went away from them more angry than ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

TWO "SIMPLETONS."

MATTERS were in this condition, when one evening Elsie Chilton made arrangements to attend a grand temperance rally, at which Fern Redpath and Dr. Fletcher were to be the leading speakers, and she herself was to sing.

Miss Redpath's intimate friends had known for some time that this was to be her last appearance in public under that name ; and the general public knew it now, for the wedding cards were out. Of course a certain degree of curiosity was felt by some, to know how the lady would appear under such circumstances. "For of course," said the lookers-on, "no one but Fern Redpath would think she could appear at all;" and they wondered not only how she would dress, but whether she would be embarrassed by the unique situation and not do so well as usual. In short, several minor matters conspired to make this a very important occasion to the general public. The largest hall in the city had been secured for the rally, and it was generally understood that people

would be present who were not in the habit of attending the average temperance meeting.

Following the public programme, was to come a reception to Miss Redpath, tendered by one of the fashionable ladies of the city, who played at philanthropy in a graceful way, and had spared no pains to make this an elegant affair.

As for Elsie Chilton, her part of the programme of arrangements consisted, as it had frequently of late, in determining how she could, with the least embarrassment, get herself to and from the several places included in the evening's plans. Aunt Emily had recovered health sufficiently to attend to her home duties, but was not able to act as chaperone to any of Elsie's goings and comings.

Once since their estrangement, Elsie had asked her father if he would attend her to an evening gathering where she was expected. He had answered her sharply in the negative, and added that since she chose to do her own planning she would have to do it without any interference from him. She must depend upon her own friends, if those of his selection were not to her mind. On this occasion Elsie determined to take his advice and depend upon her own friends. She sent a note to Mrs. Remington, assuring her that she knew little John was perfectly safe in the arms of Aunt Hannah, even though he had had the measles two weeks before, and was quite well again; Dr. Fletcher told her so. And Mrs. Remington must

certainly go to the temperance rally, and to the reception afterwards. It would be her duty to go, for she, Elsie, expected to have her company. "I shall invite myself to dinner at your house," she said, "and accompany you to the temperance meeting and to the reception afterwards ; and then return home with you. I am invited to spend the night ; you may not know it, but I am ! There are reasons why I especially desire it. I am sure I hope it will be convenient, for I am bound to stay."

Mrs. Remington had laughed over this characteristic note ; and having dispatched Jane with a cordial reply, made all her arrangements to enjoy the self-invited guest.

"It could not have planned itself better," she told Mr. Remington gleefully. "I have asked Mr. Mason here to dinner, you know, and to go with us ; now Elsie will not accuse me in her mind of having schemed to get them together. I know that she has thought that I did this occasionally in the past, and has resented it in her sweet, gentle way by overturning my schemes. She will not be maneuvered over by any one. But she cannot say a word to-night, for this is her own arrangement ; I shall take pains to let her know that Earle Mason was invited three days ago. Isn't it perfectly ridiculous, John, how those two go on ? I don't know which I want to shake the most. Elsie has staid away from here for several

weeks in order to avoid seeing him, I thoroughly believe. She says her Aunt Emily hasn't been well, and she has been very busy; but that is nonsense. I have heard of her in other places. She has become afraid people will gossip about her coming here to meet Earle Mason. I wish she weren't so afraid of gossip."

Be it understood that this good lady knew nothing about the midnight walk, and the consequent shrinking upon Elsie's part from meeting her rescuer.

It had been a part of Earle Mason's Christian policy to be entirely silent upon that subject, even to his most intimate friends; but he had indulged in some wonderment as to how he and Elsie would meet, and where, and had gone more often to Mr. Remington's than usual, in the hope of seeing her; but as the days went by and he heard incidentally that she had not been there for several weeks, and discovered by the conversation which ensued that it was a very unusual proceeding upon her part, he grew more and more certain that public gossip, which coupled Miss Chilton's and Mr. Palmer's name together, was correct; and that having received his explanations and condoned his offense, she naturally shrank from the embarrassment of meeting the one who had shared in her humiliation.

Truth to tell, there was considerable innocent scheming on the part of all concerned that night,

Mrs. Remington counseled her husband to say nothing whatever to Mr. Mason when he should arrive, about Elsie Chilton's being there. "I have not told her," she said; "I have not mentioned his name. She is getting to be such a simpleton that I am afraid she would run home if I should let her know he was coming; and as for him, he is developing such idiotic qualities in connection with her, that I feel by no means certain he would not get up a telephone message or something of the sort, to call him immediately to the office, if he should know before the dinner bell rang that Elsie was in the house."

"My dear little wife," said John Remington, with an indulgent smile, "have you undertaken to make a match between two people who seem to be resolved that there are, and shall be insuperable obstacles against their coming together?"

"No," she said briskly. "I have only undertaken to bring them together. They have been as stupid and blind as two idiots could be, but I have resolved upon bringing them together once more in my own house; or rather Elsie resolved upon it herself; I shall have the pleasure of reminding her that she invited herself. That is the part of it which relieves me from embarrassment and from responsibility, you see. Now, if they don't know enough to plan their own affairs when given a chance, why" — She left her sentence unfinished and her husband completed it.

"Why, then, you will plan again. Very well, dear, I wish you success. I will obey orders to the letter," and he went away to receive his friend in the study, and entertain him there for a while, according to their usual habit. Meantime, Elsie, who had come early, and had brought with her the bag containing what she called her "platform dress," was in simple home attire, and had given herself up to the delights of an afternoon with Mrs. Remington and little John; putting aside, for the time being, all her perplexities and forebodings, and being apparently as merry and light-hearted as a child.

Yet with all her light-heartedness, there was a background of quiet dignity and reticence as regarded herself, or her home life. She did not mention Mr. Palmer's name, and she had apparently forgotten the existence of such a person as Earle Mason. Over Fern Redpath she was enthusiastic.

"Have you seen her lately?" she asked Mrs. Remington. "She is just as lovely as can be! Isn't it delightful that those two are to be married at last, after going through seas of difficulties? If I were Fern I should be in a hurry to have the ceremony. I think I should be superstitious, almost, lest something at the last minute should come in to disarrange matters. I was so afraid you couldn't go to hear her to-night, Mrs. Remington. I think she is going to astonish some

people. She told me that she had some very plain speaking to do, and that she was glad there were to be some society people present; they so seldom had opportunity to hear plain truths. And Dr. Fletcher is a regular warrior, you know. Oh! we shall have a wonderful meeting! I feel it in my heart; and I am going to sing better than I ever did before. Did you know that?"

"I haven't a doubt of it!" said Mrs. Remington, laughing. "It is an infinite pity that little John cannot be there to hear you. He is an ardent admirer of your musical talent, Elsie; did you know it? I really thought last night I should have to send for you to get him to sleep. He became possessed with the idea that "Ottissey" ought to be there to sing. In vain I tried song after song, in my sweetest voice; he besought me to send for 'Ottissey'; actually cried, at last, and had to be scolded a little bit, before he would settle down to good manners, and take his mother's voice, instead."

"Appreciative child!" said Elsie, bestowing innumerable kisses on her young admirer's fair cheeks. "He knows a good thing when he hears it. He knows 'Ottissey' is superior to his mother in every respect; of course she is! Blessed little darling, I hope you will always love me." This last sentence with almost a tremble in her voice, and a sudden burying of her face among the boy's curls.

Mrs. Remington looked on, watchful and appreciative. She was sure that her young friend was passing through some sort of trial, of such a character that loyalty to somebody prevented her mentioning it. Since she had seen Elsie that afternoon, she had not been able to get away from the feeling that something had passed between Mr. Mason and her which had bound her to persistent dumbness when his name was mentioned. This was very bewildering, and she could not help feeling anxious; these two people had proved themselves so successful in misunderstanding each other! Still she believed that when she saw them together she should be able to decide what the "something" was, and perhaps help to remove its restraint. So with a little sigh over the blindness of some people and the obstinacy of others, she determined to avoid all personalities for the present, and wait for the dinner table developments.

When Mr. Remington came to his dressing room, just after little John had been tucked away for the night, he said to his wife: "Mason is in the back parlor. Why do not you and Elsie go down and visit with him for a few minutes before dinner? It would seem more home-like, would it not?"

Then Mrs. Remington, restraining her anxious desire to know what the meeting would develop, said, "I am not quite ready; I will send Elsie," and went back to her sitting-room. "Elsie dear,

are you ready to go down? Will you stop at Aunt Hannah's door and say to her that little John is asleep, and Jane can do all that is necessary, so she need not come up? and then wait in the parlor for me, dear. I shall be down in a very few moments."

Downstairs flitted Elsie, gave her message to Aunt Hannah, then, humming a strain from one of the songs she was to sing that evening, opened the parlor door. Mr. Mason was standing by the table, book in hand. The sudden and unmistakable light in his eyes as he turned and saw her would not have revealed any more to Mrs. Remington than she believed she knew before; and the quietness with which Elsie schooled herself to come forward and speak to him would have told nothing at all.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said, holding out his hand. "I did not know you were to be here."

"Our ignorance is mutual," she answered, smiling. "I had no idea of meeting you. Are you quite well, Mr. Mason?"

"Quite well, thank you," he said gravely. "Have you read this?" And he plunged her at once into a discussion of one of the latest books, which was creating a sensation in the literary world. Certainly nothing could be quieter or more matter-of-fact than the manner of both; yet each knew that the other was thinking of the last time they

had met, and of the terrible experience it had been to both.

"If she is deeply interested in him," said Mason to himself, "it must be very hard for her to meet me. I would go away if I could, so that she need not be distressed at the thoughts which the sight of me must bring to her."

She on her part was thinking, "He does not exactly despise me for permitting myself to be in company with a man who could sink so low, but he feels superior to me; and I do not wonder, I am sure."

So these well-intentioned simpletons blundered on their way.

The temperance meeting was something to remember that night. Certainly Fern Redpath had never appeared nor spoken better. Her platform dress was a plain black velvet, its intense blackness relieved at throat and wrists by a very narrow line of white, and at her waist by a mass of white rosebuds, fastened of course with the white ribbon.

The large hall was filled almost to overflowing at an early hour. The fashionable world was certainly there in force. The name of Redpath was an old and honored one in the city, and aside from the curiosity which they felt, they had come out to do honor to Miss Redpath's last appearance.

Moreover, many of them were guests for the reception. They heard some plain truths that night. The customs of fashionable society, not only as

they related to wine, but to cards, and other kindred temptations, "hopelessly associated with wine," the speaker said, were dealt with in a very plain, searching manner. Fern Redpath was no "kid-gloved speaker"; she had a solemn message to deliver, and here were the people whom she believed in her soul were in need of being arrested upon their gay and flippant way, by just such a message as she could bring.

She held them to close attention, while she poured her avalanche of facts, and her inevitable and startling deductions therefrom, upon this fashionable audience.

Nor was Dr. Fletcher one whit behind her in vigor and plainness of utterance. More than one fashionably dressed gentleman frowned ominously as he saw his own career mapped out before him, in language too solemn for his conscience to avoid, and heard the inevitable end described.

As for Elsie Chilton, Mrs. Remington felt in her heart that no truer word had been spoken than Elsie's, when she had declared that she was going to sing better than she ever did before. She was in white, as she almost invariably was on the platform; soft, white silk that seemed to float around her like a cloud. There was not the slightest ornament about her, nor touch of color. "Just a white angel!" Earle Mason said to himself, and he folded his arms and compressed his lips until the pain of doing so recalled him to himself. In

an opera box near at hand sat Aleck Palmer, faultlessly dressed, and with eyes fixed intently on the platform ; but with an ominous frown upon his face, that could not have been meant, surely, for Elsie Chilton !

Out of respect for the white-robed maiden who accompanied them, as well as for his wife's reception dress, Mr. Remington had taken a carriage, instead of coming by street cars, as was his usual custom, and it was waiting for them when the temperance rally was over.

"We will go round to the dressing-room door," he told Earle Mason, as they moved down the aisle. "Mrs. Remington promised Elsie to be there. She is our guest for the night. May we put her in your charge?"

"You may command me, of course," said Mr. Mason, with a very grave smile. "It gives me pleasure always to follow your directions," and he wondered as he passed through the hall and saw Aleck Palmer glower at him, what he would give to be familiar with the family who had Elsie Chilton as their guest for the night.

"Mr. Remington has given me a very pleasant charge," he said to Elsie, as he held open the carriage door for her to enter. "I hope you will ratify it ? He told me you were their guest for the evening, and that I might have you in charge."

"I shall be very glad to be taken care of," said Elsie. As he took his seat beside her he asked

himself what she would say if she knew how glad he would be to care for her all her life! And Elsie on her part thought: "He remembers how much I need somebody to take care of me; and that he has had it to do before! I wonder that he dare undertake it again, if he knows what vile slanders he is the subject of on that account!" As for Mrs. Remington, she looked at the two dignified young persons opposite her, almost with a feeling of vexation; in fact, could not help muttering to herself, "Simpletons!"

As a matter of course, the evening's exercises were more or less the subject of discussion at the reception.

The hostess, a lady with more heart than brains, had no better taste than to explain to a group who surrounded one of the refreshment tables:

"Of course I did not dare offer anything stronger than coffee, and chocolate, and little innocent drinks of that sort, this evening, since Miss Redpath and Dr. Fletcher were to be my guests; to say nothing of Mr. and Mrs. Remington, and that grave-faced young lawyer who they say is as rampant a fanatic as any of you. Was it not fortunate that I had my wits about me and tabooed every thing except what was above reproach? Else I should certainly never have dared to lift my head again after this evening's addresses. Honestly, now, don't you think you were just a little hard on us good-natured, thoughtless people?"

The "any of you" to whom this speech was addressed, included Miss Redpath and Dr. Fletcher, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Remington and a half-dozen others not of their stamp. Elsie and Mr. Mason were making their way down the room from another table where they had stopped at first. Dr. Fletcher, seeing that a reply seemed to be expected, and that no one else was disposed to make any, asked gravely :

"Do you mean in regard to the reference made to some of the customs of polite society? No names were mentioned this evening, Mrs. Greenwaide. Are we to understand that you recognized yourself in any of the persons described?"

"Now, Dr. Fletcher!" said the gay lady, "isn't that the 'unkindest cut of all!' Just because I can't quite be a fanatic, you know, I am supposed not to have any conscience! What I say is, that you people are too wholesale in your denunciations; you do not discriminate enough between classes in society."

Little Mrs. Milburn was one of the group; a society lady who tried at all times to say pleasant things whether they expressed the real thoughts of her heart or not. At this point she came to the rescue, and undertook to sustain the fanatics.

"Well, really," she said, with an appreciative little sigh, "I do not know but we shall all have to turn fanatics, if the stories afloat in society this season are half of them true. I heard a few weeks

ago that in some of our first circles a company of gay young men had instituted a new entertainment; practical jokes, I think they call them. The joke consists in getting estimable young men who are very careful of their habits and reputation, to drink — too much, you know, until they are really — offensive. I think I never heard of anything so disagreeable as that!"

Was this subject entirely accidental, or were there some in the company who knew whereof they spoke, and were taking the opportunity to secure added information. This was the question which presented itself to Earle Mason, as he and Elsie joined their friends in time to hear Mrs. Milburn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FORESHADOWINGS.

WHILE he was considering it, Miss Forester, a younger woman with pronounced ideas on nearly all subjects, chimed in:

"Yes; I have heard those stories, and with names and dates attached to some of them. I wonder what foundation there is for them. Are such jokes common, Mr. Mason?"

"Not in my set," replied Mr. Mason calmly.

Whereat a general laugh ensued; the incongruity of such doings being found in his "set" presenting itself forcibly even to those who were not by any means fanatical in regard to this subject.

Meanwhile Elsie could not help sending a startled glance toward the last speaker, and one almost of apprehension toward Miss Forester. What did she mean about names and dates? Could she know Elsie's own humiliating story? Was it to be spread out at this reception for the entertainment of the guests? But Miss Forester was engaged in planning how she would reply to

what she considered Earle Mason's rudeness. Before she had decided, good-natured Mrs. Milburn came to her aid.

"Why, Mr. Mason, of course she doesn't mean in your set ; but we all look upon you in the light of a philanthropist you know, and we thought you would be posted as to what was going on in this wicked world,"

"I wish I deserved the name," he answered gravely. And then Miss Forester rallied and persisted.

"But, Mr. Mason, we really want to know. Are the young men of our city engaged in such entertainments to any extent ?"

"I shall have to confess my ignorance, Miss Forester," her victim responded good-humoredly. "I should like to pose as a philanthropist, or even as a well-informed person, but circumstances will not permit it. I have heard of such blots as you mention, but for the honor of our city I trust they are rare."

Elsie Chilton now became aware of the presence of another guest ; one who stood at the refreshment table nearest to theirs, and in a position to readily hear every word which had been uttered. This was none other than Mr. Palmer, who was, at the moment when Elsie discovered him, looking in the direction of their party, and so thrown off his guard that he wore an unmistakable and portentous scowl upon his face. Elsie was not sur-

prised at the scowl. What would that persistent and too well informed Miss Forester say next, in pursuit of further information? She did not keep them long in suspense.

"Well, I wish I knew a little more about some things. I have heard certain statements made that I would like to have corroborated; and now that we have the rare opportunity of being able to refer to a medical college professor, it seems to me we might as well learn something. Dr. Fletcher, enlighten me, will you, in regard to one point? I have a special reason for desiring to know the truth. We were talking about these practical jokes, a few days ago; a lady well known in society and myself; and she knew a case in point, and gave me some of the details which were very interesting, I assure you; were I at liberty to mention names, you would agree with me. I was expressing my indignation that such things were possible, and remarked that no one was safe from society pests known as practical jokers; that any gentleman was liable to be caught in their snares, and humiliated in the same way as the one of whom she had been speaking. Now to my surprise, this lady assured me emphatically that such was not the case; that there was not the slightest danger of a gentleman who was a total abstainer being humiliated in any such manner. Dr. Fletcher, I want to know if she is correct?"

All eyes were now turned upon Dr. Fletcher,

and some of the company, at least, were listening with almost painful attention, their hearts full of a horrible fear of what might come.

Miss Forester had the name of being brave enough to be very outspoken when she chose; and no one could be sure how much she knew. Elsie Chilton felt that she would not have been astonished to hear her own name called as a witness to the truth of some of the lady's statements. Dr. Fletcher, however, who knew no reason for being very especially interested in this conversation, responded composedly:

"Have the goodness to state your proposition specifically, Miss Forester. If my professional reputation is at stake I must answer very carefully."

"Why, the proposition is simple enough. What I want to know is: Can you, for instance, Dr. Fletcher, who I suppose are a total abstainer, be made the victim of a practical joke by the use of stimulants?"

"May I claim a teacher's privilege and answer your question by asking another? Suppose you were constitutionally and on principle opposed to the drinking of coffee; suppose that you never allowed yourself to drink a single drop of it at any time; suppose you were so thoroughly fixed in this determination that you had pledged yourself never to do so under any circumstances, could I, do you think, play a practical joke upon you by

presenting you with a cup of coffee prepared in any manner whatever?"

The conclusion was so entirely self-evident that Miss Forester felt that her powers of discrimination had not been shown to advantage; and the smile which greeted Dr. Fletcher's reply annoyed her.

"I beg your pardon," she said; "I forgot I was speaking to a fanatic. That is the name by which you pronounced people choose to be known, I believe? Of course my question had reference to people who do not take such pronounced and one-sided views upon any subject that they are not open to argument, and perhaps to solicitation. I should dislike, for instance, to be so violently opposed to coffee that I could not take a few sips of it if propriety seemed to demand. It will not do for ladies and gentlemen to be too arbitrary about anything, will it, Dr. Fletcher?"

"It depends," he answered gravely. "With your explanation of the case, Miss Forester, I should reply unhesitatingly that only fanatics could be absolutely sure of not becoming victims to practical jokers, in the line which you mention." And then Earle Mason, who felt that this conversation had gone as far as was safe for several parties concerned, abruptly changed the subject, and as soon as possible moved away with his charge.

"Do you think," Elsie asked as soon as they

were at a safe distance, "that Miss Forester meant us — me? that she can know about — that night?"

"I think it hardly possible," he said. "There are so few persons who know the truth with regard to that matter. I do not think the fellows who were guilty care to talk about it. My impression is that Mr. Palmer's statements to them have been too severe to give them any desire to be prominent in such work, and, indeed, they were probably two thirds intoxicated at the time. When they were sober they would, every one, be ashamed of it. As for the other persons, the gentleman would undoubtedly be silent, and I took the utmost precaution, Miss Chilton, that no outsiders should understand the matter in the least. Indeed, I am confident that Mr. Palmer's man is the only one besides ourselves who has a suspicion with regard to it, and no one understands the importance of being silent better than Mr. Palmer's man; so that I do not think it could have been possible that anything personal was intended to-night."

"I have wanted to thank you for that evening's work," she said simply, "and for the way in which you managed everything, but I have not known how."

"I do not need to be thanked," he answered, speaking coldly, and he felt that he could not trust himself to say more, nor endure another word on this subject. He felt humiliated for the girl who

walked beside him. He believed she was thanking him for taking care to guard the name of the man who was her friend. He seemed to hear again the slow, sickening drawl and the offensive words with which the half-drunken man had pressed his suit that night, and if the memory of it turned him fairly sick with disgust, how was it possible for this woman to think of it in any other light? He began at once to talk about indifferent topics; and took care that no sentence should be so framed as to lead back to this dangerous one again. Moreover, he took care to relieve his charge of his attendance as soon and as much as propriety would admit, during the remainder of the evening. She had been consigned to his care, and he would see that she had every attention; but the man whom he believed to be her choice was one of the guests, and he resolved not to stand in the way of their enjoying each other's society. However, something manifestly stood in the way. Not once during the hour that they lingered did Mr. Palmer cross to the side of the room where Miss Chilton kept her stand near her friends the Remingtons. Earle Mason watched this condition of things with growing indignation. His explanation of it was that Mr. Palmer was not willing to associate for a few minutes with people whom he disliked, even for the pleasure of having Miss Chilton's society; yet she who took such delight in her friends was willing to give them all up

for him. He decided that it was an incomprehensible world.

The next event of importance in the social world was the marriage of Fern Redpath. Not at all a society lady herself, yet because of the old name, and the associations clustering around it, on special occasions society claimed her. Her lady mother, who had an aristocratic vein running through her system, took care that on this occasion society should have its due. Invitations were very numerous, and included some of the choicest names in the social world.

The ceremony was to be in the morning, at ten. "A most unfashionable hour," Fern Redpath admitted, "and my mother is grieved that I cannot be fashionable on this day of my life at least. But it is really quite necessary that we take the noon train in order to make important connections. And since the through train has the bad taste to start at that hour, there seemed to be nothing for it but to choose an earlier one for the ceremony. So far as I am individually concerned, I like it. I can be ready at ten o'clock, as easy as I could at twelve."

On the evening before the marriage, when the parties chiefly interested were gathered for a rehearsal, unexpected complications arose. The little family and their very special friends were in Fern's reception room awaiting the arrival of the

evening train, which was to bring Grove Redpath, the elder brother, and Dr. Fletcher's "best man."

"I cannot think what detains them," Fern had said. "It seems to me that they have had ample time to drive from the station. Still the train may have been late."

"No," said Dr. Fletcher, "the train is not late. I heard the whistle as I came up town, and timed it. I had planned, you know, to meet the train myself, but missed it because of the call I mentioned; and I remember I was afraid Grove would reach here before I could, and was relieved by hearing the whistle of the train just as I caught the Avenue car."

"Then they certainly have had time to reach here!" exclaimed Mrs. Redpath. "Why, Doctor, it is a half-hour since you came, is it not?"

"There is the postman's ring," said Fern. "I do hope there is no letter from Grove saying that he cannot come until to-morrow morning. Wouldn't it be dreadful to have that boy wait until morning when we haven't seen him for a year? I thought it was wretched in him to put off coming until to-night."

She went herself to meet the postman, and came back presently with an open letter in her hand, and a grave face.

"What is it?" asked her mother quickly. "Is it from Grove? O, dear! has anything happened?"

"Nothing serious, mamma; but something

rather trying." And she passed the letter into her mother's eager hands and explained to the others that Grove could not be there for the wedding. He had been ill — not seriously; one of his old attacks; and had said nothing about it, confidently expecting to be able to start on the appointed day. But behold his physician, with the "pig-headedness" which seemed to belong to the profession — and here the writer begged his future brother-in-law's pardon — had utterly refused to allow him to travel. It was the most utter nonsense of course, and if he had not been badly brought up to yield implicit obedience to the family physician, he should be there in spite of him, but as it was, Fern was not to refuse to be married on his account, and they were none of them to worry the least bit; he would come himself with a carriage to welcome the bridal party — and mother — to his bachelor quarters; so it was only a disappointment of a few hours, after all. The letter was finally read aloud, because the mother was so proud of its brightness that she could not resist the temptation.

"Well," said Elsie, meditatively, when the first excitement was over, "it is very strange; but there cannot be even a marriage ceremony, it seems, without a change of programme. I never knew a concert programme to be carried out exactly as it had been planned; but I thought weddings were different."

Dr. Fletcher laughed. "Weddings are subject to the laws of mutability, my dear Miss Chilton, along with the rest of mundane things," he said gayly. "It is too bad to miss Grove, but let us be glad that it is no worse. I know about those attacks of his; and he is to be congratulated on the 'pig-headedness' of his physician. It would have been very imprudent for him to have traveled. Now, we need to hold a council of war, do we not? Or, I beg pardon, of peace, of course. Miss Chilton, you are suddenly deserted. What is to be done under such circumstances?"

"I do not know, I am sure!" said Elsie, in a tone of mock resignation. "Since I cannot have Grove, could I be expected to care what was done with me?"

Following these first merry sentences, calculated to help the family cover their disappointment over the non-arrival of the son and brother, whose coming had been so eagerly awaited, there was an earnest discussion of plans. Elsie had so long been selected by her friend as her sole bridesmaid that she declared any change in this regard to be impossible. The only thing was to fill Grove's place; and how could this be done with any propriety at so late an hour?

"Of course Miss Chilton's preferences are to be considered," said Dr. Fletcher, when appealed to as to whom among his friends he would select. "So far as I am personally concerned I have no

very intimate friends within a serviceable distance. Among my newer friends, if he would be willing to serve me, I should not hesitate to choose Mr. Mason. It is true I have not known him long or intimately, but I am intimate enough to respect and admire him; and if it were agreeable to all concerned, I should be very glad to ask him to stand by me. Nor should I hesitate in the least to do so because of the lateness of the hour; Mason's strong good sense is a characteristic of him. Moreover, he is a man of resources, and would not be embarrassed by the position. What do you say, am I to look him up and throw myself upon his mercy, or have you other suggestions?"

Apparently no one had any advice to offer; Elsie promptly retreated behind her first sentimental statement, that since it could not be Grove, why should she be expected to have any interest in the matter?

"But you must have interest in the matter," insisted Fern, in an undertone; "Elsie, you know very well that the only objection Earle Mason will have, will be the fancy that you do not desire it."

"Why should he fancy that?" asked Elsie.

"Because," said her friend, emphatically, "both he and you can fancy a great deal, on occasion. You can be unaccountably stupid, sometimes, Elsie Chilton."

But she declined to comment on this statement, and Elsie was left to make out of it what she

could, while Dr. Fletcher went to see if he could secure Earle Mason's services.

"The rehearsal is indefinitely postponed!" he said with mock solemnity, as he departed. "I wonder if it is a foreshadowing of other delays?" Fern thought aloud, rather than addressed to any one. "If I were superstitious it might make me anxious. Delays connected with wedding ceremonies are bad omens, are they not?"

"I do not know," said Elsie gayly. "I do not see opportunity for any other delays which could be serious. Dr. Fletcher and you are certainly here, and in the event of Dr. Oliver's illness, another clergyman could be secured, so I think it is quite safe, Fern. But I must say I am sorry for poor Grove, as well as for ourselves. What a disappointment it must be to the boy!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Redpath tremulously, "and to the boy's mother, as well. It does seem hard that when their only sister is to be married Grove should be ill, and Willard separated from us by a great ocean."

"Never mind, mother," said Fern cheerily, "you and I will be with Grove in two days more, and Willard is coming home in the fall."

Earle Mason was found, and showed all the good sense for which Dr. Fletcher gave him credit, by being heartily willing to serve his friends even at the eleventh hour.

"Personally, it will give me great pleasure to do

so," he said promptly, "but" — and then he hesitated, and flushed in a way that Dr. Fletcher did not understand.

"I suppose it would not be possible to — make other arrangements?" he said at last.

"Why, my dear fellow, of course!" said Dr. Fletcher; "it would be quite possible to have the ceremony without any bridesmaid, or groomsman; but then, as we all happen to want you, if you are willing, I do not see any difficulty. What other arrangements suggest themselves to you as desirable?"

"None that can be carried out. I was thinking that if Miss Redpath and you were intimately acquainted with Mr. Palmer it would be courteous, at least, to give him the opportunity."

"To be my groomsman!" said Dr. Fletcher, in such an astonished tone that Mason was obliged to laugh. "Upon my word, I do not think it would; I should consider it an insult if he should offer me the same position. My dear sir, what suggests such a wild proposition as that? It is not possible you can be planning for Miss Chilton's sake?"

"I suppose such to be the case," said Mr. Mason, growing instantly grave, "but I am not in the lady's confidence, and of course do not know. It simply occurred to me as an arrangement which might be pleasant for her, but under the circumstances I suppose it is not possible."

"No," said Dr. Fletcher emphatically. "It is not possible, nor can I believe it possible that you are correct in your suppositions. If you were, Mason, you and I should do what we could to keep such people apart; should we not?"

"But if we cannot?" said Earle Mason, with a constrained smile; and then without more ado he made himself ready, and went to the marriage rehearsal.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"IT IS VERY STRANGE!"

THE marriage morning was beautiful with sunshine and birds and flowers. It was still early in May, but a hint of June was in the beautiful balmy air. "The most summery day of the season," the guests remarked, as in groups and singly, they began to arrive at the Redpath home.

The long parlors had been transformed into bowers of beauty. Elsie Chilton's skillful fingers had been at work there, among the flowers, since early morning. It was she and Fern who had planned most of the floral decorations. "No formality, please," Fern had said; "I will not have my home nor myself put into the hands of professionals. Don't let us have any marriage bells, nor marriage mottoes, nor formal society proprieties of any sort. They always remind me of the pillows and crowns and harps that one sees at funerals. I want the flowers scattered around as though the children had come in with their hands full, and tossed them where they would. Do, Elsie, see to it that everything looks exactly unlike what a pro-

fessional florist would do." Elsie had seen to it with great delight, and the result, in its simplicity and beauty, astonished the eyes of the fashionable world.

"This is nothing but wild flowers!" exclaimed one, stopping before a mass of bloom in a window seat. "Who would imagine that anything so pretty could have been made out of them? Just look at that moss! It never came from any florist's in this city I know."

"It came from the back of an old log way down in the woods, twelve miles from here," explained an intimate friend of the family; "and one of Fern's mission boys who used to be with her last winter, trudged here last night and brought it to her. Doesn't it make a lovely decoration?"

So the guests gathered, and wandered about and admired, and entertained themselves as best they could, and watched the solemn, old-fashioned clock in the hall, and wondered if this bride would be prompt. Promptness was one of her virtues. Her public meetings always commenced at the hour and moment when they were advertised.

Upstairs in the bride's room everything was quiet. Fern Redpath had declared that she could be ready at ten o'clock as well as twelve; she could have been ready at eight o'clock as well as ten. She was quite ready, even to the white gloves which completed the purity of her dress, and sat by the eastern window where she had, in

the early morning, watched the sun, as he came up in splendor to glorify this new day. Only Elsie was with her, Mrs. Redpath having retired to her own room. They had been having a last talk together, the mother and daughter. At least the mother had called it "a last talk," and had wiped the tears from her eyes as she said it. These two had been much to each other; and Mrs. Redpath could realize, perhaps as her daughter could not, what it was to have their lives divided.

"Mother thinks it will make a difference between us," Fern said to Elsie, smiling gravely. "She thinks I cannot be the same to her when I am a married woman. I am going to live for the purpose of showing her that I can be more to her, and more to every one with whom I have had to do; I expect to be more to all my duties in life than I ever was before. I have lived a divided life for years, Elsie, and no one but myself has realized it. Paul was in Europe, and I never expected to see him again or to be anything to him. I lived a divided life all the time. Now our lives are one, and nothing can ever separate them again, not even death. Isn't it beautiful, Elsie, to think that death cannot separate us from our beloved? Yet some brides cannot feel that," she added with a thoughtful, far-away look; "I wonder how it feels to be the bride of one who has no interest beyond this life? no plans except those which the grave can break? Can you imagine how a Chris-

tian can deliberately put herself in any such position as that?"

"No," said Elsie gravely. "I cannot imagine how a Christian, who felt that Christ should be first and must be first, could marry a merely nominal Christian; one who acknowledged Christ indeed, but made him secondary. I should be miserable in trying to live such a life as that. I am glad for you, Fern, that Dr. Fletcher is more than a temperance man, more than a moralist, more than just a church member; that his life is hid with Christ in God, and that he makes one think of Paul, his namesake, when he said, 'This one thing I do.'"

Fern turned toward her with radiant eyes. "Does he impress you so?" she asked. "You have never spoken so plainly before. I am glad to have you tell me this. I know just what you mean. I feel it to my heart's center. He is noble; he is single-hearted; he puts Christ first in all things, small as well as large, to a degree that seems to me unusual in a man. There is not a fiber of his being that I cannot trust, Elsie, and I pity the woman who is planning to marry a man of whom she cannot say as much."

"Amen!" said Elsie, with quiet gravity, as one who accepted this as a matter of course; and Fern Redpath, looking at her with keen eyes, said to herself: "She never means to marry Aleck Palmer. I wonder if that young man will go on stumbling

over him until he loses her? Something ought to be done to help those two; only I do not know what it would be, such hopelessly reserved people as they both are! and with no one having any right to give them advice or information."

She broke off this train of thought to ask a question which had been on her mind for some minutes.

"Has Dr. Fletcher come yet, Elsie?"

"Oh! I think so. It is almost ten o'clock, and I heard Mr. Mason's voice in the hall some time ago; I have been expecting their summons for several minutes. I suppose you want to be prompt?"

"Indeed I do," Fern answered emphatically. "I have always said that I could see no reasonable excuse for a bride keeping everybody waiting. If any person on earth should be ready beforehand, with plenty of time to be deliberate, it seems to me it is a bride. I would not like to be married in a flurry; nor, I confess to you, would I like to be even five minutes behind time. I believe promptness has become one of my eccentricities, I have been so tried by tardiness in others. That is Mr. Mason's voice now, is it not?" Elsie replied by opening the door to his tap, but instead of admitting him, she went into the hall and closed the door after her.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but I want to see Dr. Fletcher a moment. Can you direct me where to find him?"

"He is not in his dressing-room," said Elsie. "I passed it a few moments ago, and the door was open."

"Then he is with Miss Redpath, perhaps?"

"No; Fern is here in her sitting-room, and he is not with her; has not been, this morning. I thought he came with you, did he not?"

"No," said Earle Mason, looking anxious, he hardly knew why. "I have not seen him this morning. He was to call for me, but he did not, and I decided that in the excitement he had forgotten it; and as the hour was growing late I came on without him. But I will return at once; he may be waiting."

"How very strange!" said Elsie. "He surely would not have waited for any one this morning, and he is a very prompt man. It is nearly ten, is it not?"

"It is quite ten," said Earle Mason. "I will go at once and find him."

Elsie returned to the sitting-room, filled with a nameless anxiety. Earle Mason had looked so astonished, so bewildered, when he learned that Dr. Fletcher was not in the house, and it was so utterly unlike him. "Still," Elsie reflected, "there are a dozen things which might have detained him against his will. Something about the carriage, or the horses, or there may have been a blockade through the streets where he had to drive. I will not worry. How absurd!" And she explained

to Fern, in as unconcerned a manner as she could assume, that the knock was Mr. Mason's; he had stopped to ask her some question concerning details, and had gone downstairs again.

Then the solemn, old-fashioned clock in the hall struck the hour of ten.

Fern started from her seat. "Why, it is ten o'clock!" she said. "Dr. Fletcher and I planned that we would leave this room just as that clock began to strike! It is very strange that he is not here. I do not like to be late, Elsie. Really and truly, I cannot help feeling almost superstitious about that; I have thought about it so much, and made a point of it."

"Then that accounts for the delay," said Elsie, trying to laugh. "When people pick out such very little matters and try to make points of them, the points are almost certain to be broken off. Five or ten minutes beyond the hour can never be supposed to be late for a bride. Don't be absurd, my dear, and allow yourself any little eccentricities of nerves, just because you are going to be Mrs. Fletcher so soon."

Fern laughed and settled back in her chair again; and Elsie, unable longer to restrain her nervous impatience, slipped from the room. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, twenty minutes, half an hour; then Elsie came in, her face white to her lips.

"What is it?" asked Fern, turning toward her

instantly, and speaking with unnatural calmness. "What is it, Elsie? tell me quick, please! I know something has happened."

"No," said Elsie, "nothing has happened except a vexatious delay. You are not to be nervous, Fern, nor unreasonable. We do not know what has delayed Dr. Fletcher. Something of importance, of course. He will explain when he reaches here."

"Then he has not come?"

"No; and Mr. Mason, who went to his house to learn the cause of the detention, says that it is closed and the shades drawn, as it would naturally be at this hour; and the clerk at the Belvidere says that he heard Dr. Fletcher go out this morning very early, before sunrise; and he does not think he has been back since."

"That is very strange!" said Fern, "he would not dress for the day before sunrise. He must have returned, of course. Did the clerk see him when he left the house?"

"Not to speak with; but he says several gentlemen stood on the doorsteps with him, very early; and he saw him lock the door and move away with them. There is no one in the house to inquire of, is there, Fern?"

Miss Redpath shook her head. "O, no! he has no servants as yet. One of the chambermaids from the Belvidere has charge of his rooms; and he takes his meals at the Arnold Club Rooms.

They were very anxious to have him remain with them ; and the time was so short before he would be in his own house, that he thought he might as well. Has he breakfasted at the Arnold this morning, Elsie ?"

"I do not know," said Elsie. "I do not think Mr. Mason knew of that arrangement. I will go and tell him."

She came back almost instantly to Fern, and seemed relieved to find her still sitting quietly by the window ; very pale, it is true, but with no look of terror, or even of dismay overspreading her face.

"It is very strange," she said, looking up with a little smile, "but do you know I am reminded of what we were talking about a few moments ago ? It is pleasant to be able to have absolute trust in Dr. Fletcher. I know quite as well as I shall when he has told me about it, that something beyond his control has detained him. It is so different from what it used to be years ago when I first knew him ! There was a time when delays had an indefinable dread for me ; now it can be nothing more serious than an accident to somebody ; a matter of life and death, perhaps, which obliges him to stop and render service. It cannot be an accident to himself, else he or somebody would think to send me word."

"Yes," said Elsie respectfully. She had come in to try in some vague way to comfort this waiting bride, and instead had herself been comforted.

"It must be beautiful to have such faith in the man one is about to marry; and certainly I should never marry one in whom I could not have it," she told herself firmly. Then they waited and waited. And the minutes were not slow; they seemed fairly to wing themselves away. If it only would not get to be eleven o'clock! What could the guests below be thinking? And oh! what should they do with Mrs. Redpath who never knew what time it was? nor was astonished at any amount of delay? Yet when the fact dawned upon her that it was not only eleven, but was actually dangerously nearing the hour of twelve, what would be said to her, or done with her?

The minutes rushed away; the solemn old clock tolled out twelve. Mr. Mason came and went like one distracted. Mr. Remington, who was one of the invited guests, having joined him in the search, together they planned and wondered, and went from one point of possible detention to another, and as yet they had no word of the missing bridegroom. At last Dr. Oliver, Fern Redpath's white-haired pastor, stated very briefly, and without any details, which he could not give, that an accident had prevented Dr. Fletcher from keeping his appointment, and the guests were asked to quietly disperse.

Mrs. Remington had gone some time before, at Elsie's earnest solicitation, to Mrs. Redpath; and Elsie, white-faced and miserable, was simply

staying in the room with Fern, not daring to say a word.

"Don't!" Fern had said, in sudden sharp tones a little while before, as Elsie was trying timidly to give voice to some surmise which might have an element of hope in it. "Don't, dear. Forgive me. I know you mean to comfort me, but I can not bear your voice, cannot bear any voice just now. I must be still. Do not imagine for an instant that I distrust him. There has been some accident, but it is something which he cannot help. It is all right, only — don't talk to me." And she sat perfectly still, with her white-gloved hands clasped in her lap. She neither stirred nor shivered, even when the old clock said in slow, solemn tones, "One, two, three," up to twelve; even when the train in the distance gave a long, loud, parting shriek; the train which was to have borne her away a bride! Even when the carriages began to roll from the door, carrying with them the disappointed guests, Fern Redpath sat with those closely-clasped hands, and said not one word. She did not even turn her head to listen when Elsie's strained ears caught the low sound of a tap at the door, and went softly out to meet Earle Mason in the hall.

"I have nothing to report," he said, shaking his head in answer to her eager look, "and I only came to tell you so. There is no one living, apparently, who has seen Fletcher this morning."

"He must be dead!" said Elsie, in awe-stricken tones. "I know Fern thinks so; and there is nothing else, no accident which could have hindered him from communicating with us."

"But even the dead leave some token," said Earle Mason. "The doors were closed and locked, and the curtains drawn; and there was no key in the lock. He must have gone out somewhere. Miss Chilton, there has been foul play! Mr. Remington thinks we should put detectives on the track; but we hesitate to do so without conferring with the family. Could you learn from Miss Redpath, do you think, whether that should be the next step?"

"Oh, I do not know!" said Elsie, in deep distress; then she told of Fern's last words to her, and of the solemn silence in which she was sitting at that moment. And then Earle Mason thought of a man whom he had not yet seen, who might possibly offer some clew by which this mystery could be solved, and went away; and returned again, Mr. Remington with him, both of them utterly without knowledge, both convinced now, that without another hour's delay detectives should be set at work.

"We are losing precious time!" said Mr. Remington excitedly. "He may be in great peril at this moment. He is one of the victims, Elsie, to the curse that is upon our country. I feel sure of it. There have been mutterings in the air ever

since his lecture the other night. He spoke more plainly in some directions than any other speaker has had the courage to do. I felt then that he would have reason to remember it; if he has not had to answer for it with his life, we have cause to be deeply thankful. I know some creatures in the liquor business who are angry enough for any sort of revenge. Which reminds me, Mason, that we have not seen Peterson yet. I am going to see him at once! I don't think that man can deceive me, and he generally knows what is going on among his set."

And Mr. Remington vanished, leaving Earle Mason standing irresolute in the hall. "I do not know which way to turn next," he said; "I can not but feel, as Mr. Remington says, that we are losing valuable time. Do you not think that Miss Redpath might" — then he was interrupted by the arrival of one of the frightened servants of the house, who appealed to Elsie.

"O, Miss Elsie! a dirty boy has just brought this for Miss Fern. Ought I to give it to her?"

It was a bit of twisted paper, much soiled, apparently by ill-kept hands. There was scarcely a possibility that it could be a communication from Dr. Fletcher; yet Elsie grasped at it eagerly, and looked at Mr. Mason for advice.

"Open it!" he said quickly. "Learn what it is, before you give it to Miss Redpath; let us spare her anything we can."

It proved to be a badly spelled, wretchedly written note addressed to Fern, and making the startling statement that if "Mis Redpath woud go to dr. Flecher's room she woud find that his Frends had done evrything that respeck and afecktion coud sugest; the doors was locked, but the key was on top of the clock which stood in the Hole at the hed of the stares."

Amazement and consternation held Mr. Mason quiet for the first moment after reading this remarkable message. In the next one he had formed his plans. "Let us go immediately, Miss Chilton, and see what clew this may offer. There has been some evil work done. If I am not mistaken in Miss Redpath, she will want to go at once. Will you see to that part of it? There is a carriage at the door for her and you."

Elsie turned and sped into Fern's room. "Fern," she said, "they have sent for you. Be very quick! There is no time to make any change of dress. Will you wrap this about you?" And she seized upon a handsome traveling wrap spread out on the bed, and covered with it the fair bridal robes.

Fern had risen the moment she was spoken to, and was rapidly drawing off her white gloves. It was she who seized her bonnet, tied it on hastily, and said:

"I am ready. Where are we to go?"

Elsie, meanwhile, sought among the hangings

of the closet, and produced a light gossamer for herself, which she wrapped about her, and in an incredibly short space of time the two appeared in the hall. Mr. Mason hurried them into the carriage, gave his order, and they dashed away down the avenue. As they went, he made Fern acquainted with what little they knew themselves; not in the baldly suggestive manner which the note had used, but with careful phrase; preparing her mind for some accident, the character of which he could not determine.

"We must wait," he said, "and trust for a few minutes longer; then any knowledge will be better than this suspense, will it not?"

And the carriage halted before Dr. Fletcher's elegant home, which he had prepared for the reception of his bride.

CHAPTER XXV.

AT LAST.

THE front door was closed and locked, but Mr. Mason had already borrowed the latch key of the chambermaid from the Belvidere who had charge of the rooms, and had been upstairs, only to learn, as he had stated to Elsie, that the door of Dr. Fletcher's room was locked and the key removed. With swift, silent movements the three made their way up the long winding flight of stairs, and Earle Mason sought with nervous haste for the key on the "clock which stood in the hole." Certainly here was a key — he could not be sure that the sensation with which he grasped it was one of relief. It fitted itself promptly to the lock and he threw the door wide open. Will they ever forget the sight which greeted their eyes?

A large handsome room, furnished with exquisite taste and care, showing everywhere the touch of a refined and cultured hand, but in the center of the room, spread upon a table, was an awful shape, shrouded in white, and almost literally buried in

flowers. A pillow at the head made of immortelles, bore the word "Rest" formed of English violets, and placed at proper distances were cross, and crown, and harp, and all the various devices in flowers that modern custom has decreed shall be prepared for the honor of the dead. The air was breathless with the odor of tuberoses, hyacinths, heliotropes, and all rich and delicate perfumes which choice hot-house flowers could bestow.

"He is dead!" said Fern; "I knew he was." These were the first words she had spoken since they started, and her voice was unnaturally calm. It was evident that her bewildered brain did not take in the strangeness, not to say the insulting features of the situation. If Dr. Fletcher were indeed dead, what right had other minds than theirs to order his surroundings? This thought flashed instantly upon Elsie, but to judge from Earle Mason's face there were darker ones in his mind. He strode forward and tore, rather than removed, the white covering; tumbling crown and harp upon the floor and trampling upon one of them in his frantic haste. There before them was Dr. Fletcher's face, the eyes closed, the features set. He was in evening dress, just as he had left them the night before. Fern Redpath had moved forward and stood looking down at him, still with that utterly unnatural calm upon her face; but Earle Mason, without so much as glancing at her, tore away the strictures from about the throat of

the apparently dead, in wild haste, issuing his orders at the same moment in sharp quick tones.

"This is a case for the doctors; he is not dead. Miss Redpath, take the carriage and drive for Dr. Wadsworth and Dr. Thurston. Wadsworth is the nearest; do you know where to find him? Bring him first, and then go for Dr. Thurston with all possible speed. Elsie, run to the Belvidere and tell them to send me two men and a pail of hot water; and fly both of you; we will save him yet!"

The effect upon Miss Redpath was different from what he had expected; she had started at his first words like one roused from a trance, and the color rolled in waves over the face which had a moment before been pallid. She clutched at Earle Mason's sleeve and spoke in a terrible whisper:

"Mr. Mason, you say he is not dead; is it alcohol?"

"No," said Earle Mason; "it is poison. Be quick, I tell you!" But he had no need to say the words; she had turned on the instant and was gone, her white bridal robes trailing utterly unheeded down the stairs.

That strange day reached its close at last. Certainly it had been an eventful one to those connected with the tragedy which had been lived through since its dawning. The physicians summoned in wild haste by Fern Redpath, and two

others whom they had promptly called to their aid, had worked for hours as those who were battling with death. Mr. Mason, Mr. Remington, and others who joined them, had rushed hither and thither obeying the orders given them; while Fern and her mother with Mrs. Remington and Elsie staid in the elegant parlors below, and did that other harder thing, waited. Fern Redpath moved with quick steps up and down the room, or went out into the hall and gazed up the stairs at the closed door above, like one who was holding herself in check by almost superhuman powers; she had not yet reached the stage where she could endure the sound of human voices in inquiry or in sympathy; she even looked imploringly toward Mrs. Remington to answer for her, when her mother spoke. At last Earle Mason came to them; the tense lines about his face were relaxed, and a faint smile hovered around his lips.

"I bring good news," he said, looking at Fern. "They have conquered; he is rallying steadily; the doctors believe that the danger is past." And then Fern Redpath turned and moved, or tottered rather, toward a seat, and would have fallen had not she been caught in Elsie's watchful arms.

"Poor darling!" said the mother, bending over her, "she never fainted before in her life; in all the terrible experiences through which she has been, she never gave way before. I am afraid it will kill her."

"O, no!" said Mrs. Remington soothingly; "it will rest her. I am glad she has fainted; she was too self-controlled to endure it longer."

Toward ten o'clock of that same day, they were lingering, these friends who had lived through so much together, in Dr. Fletcher's upstairs library. Weak as he was, he had quietly insisted upon being dressed, and was sitting back in the large rocker "being entertained," he said with a smile. Very little knowledge had they as yet of the facts connected with the strange experiences of the day. Truth to tell, Dr. Fletcher knew almost as little as any of them. He had found some one waiting for him, he explained, on reaching his rooms the night before. The son of a poor woman whom he had befriended; the boy was in distress; his mother was very sick, and the doctor in attendance did not seem to them, to know what he was about. If Dr. Fletcher would only come and see her he felt that she would be cured. So Dr. Fletcher went, of course, and found that there was need for his services, and staid long, quite into the night; then coming home felt exhausted, faint, and remembered that he had been in too much haste that evening to take his usual dinner. He resolved to step into a coffee-house near at hand and take a cup of coffee and some rolls. The coffee-house was one of the more common sort, he explained, but he was interested in the young fellow who was trying to keep it, and often

stopped there for a cup of coffee or a glass of milk, in order to encourage the man. He noticed that there was some delay in serving him that night; it had led him to ask after a while, if he was too late for coffee; but they assured him that it would be ready very soon, so he waited not to hurt the feelings of the proprietor. He noticed that he was served by a new waiter, one who seemed unused to the business, and was awkward; and the proprietor apologized and said their regular help for that hour was out, and they had to take what they could get.

When the coffee was finally brought, he discovered that it was not even so good as usual — and it was never remarkable for goodness — but this had a peculiar and disagreeable taste; however, he drained the cup, for the same reason that had brought him to the house; the proprietor was watching him, and had no doubt done the best he could. Then he had gone out, feeling strangely; feeling after a few minutes as if the night was growing chill, and he was getting numb; he had tried to walk rapidly to overcome the sense of lethargy, and had wondered at his being so extremely tired; he began to realize that he could not move rapidly, that his strength was leaving him; then he became aware that some person or persons met him, stopped and spoke to him, took hold of him; after that he knew absolutely nothing more; saw nothing, felt nothing, until roused by a stinging

sensation and he saw Earle Mason bending over him. The solemnly awful condition in which he had at first been found Dr. Fletcher did not yet know ; flowers and ghastly drapery had been hurriedly pushed out of sight, long before he recovered consciousness.

Many and various were the theories advanced concerning this strange and, in some respects, horrible experience. In fact, the house had been alive with speculation all the afternoon.

The doctors in attendance had kept their own counsel, only admitting, in response to Mason's eager inquiries, that there had been an improper use of an opiate ; probably administered by some person who was ignorant of the true nature of the article he used, and of the seriousness of its effect on a constitution like Dr. Fletcher's.

"It is another specimen of those vile attempts at practical joking, I presume," Dr. Thurston said, as he drew on his gloves and prepared to depart. "There is a good deal of that going on, and it touches high circles, I am told. The miscreants who planned this probably did not understand what they were about. They did not mean murder, I suspect ; they only meant a lethargy which would delay his marriage and cause consternation and misery to a number of persons ; that is some people's idea of a practical joke. But this was a very narrow escape. I congratulate you, Mason, on not being five minutes later."

"Who could have planned such a thing?" questioned Mr. Remington. "This coffee-house, for instance; the proprietor knows Dr. Fletcher, has been befriended by him; I know the young fellow; if I can believe in anybody any more, I cannot think that he would be guilty of underhand dealing."

"Probably he was not," answered Dr. Thurston; "more than likely the doctor was watched, his footsteps dogged all the evening with a view to practicing upon him. Possibly they had planned to carry out their designs at his club that evening, or wherever he dines, and as he says he did not dine at all, and so failed them there, they traced him elsewhere; and delayed the coffee, as you heard him say, and made friends with the new waiter, who was 'awkward in the business'; or smuggled one of their number in as waiter *pro tem.;* there are a great many ways of managing these matters, Mr. Remington. Clergymen can not be expected to be posted. Dr. Fletcher has been unfortunate enough to secure the ill will of some of the hard characters in our city; it will not do for either clergymen or physicians to be too pronounced in their ideas. But I congratulate you all on the happy termination of what was very nearly a tragedy, and will bid you good evening."

And this was as far as their efforts at investigation had led them as yet. But they lingered and talked in Dr. Fletcher's library.

During the afternoon Elsie had been home and had returned attired in a plain street dress. Also she had been at the Redpath home, and had brought to Fern a dress more suitable to the day, as it had developed, than her bridal robes. Mrs. Remington, to whom Mrs. Redpath had clung all day, as one on whom she could lean, had not been home at all; but Mr. Remington, who had been back and forth during the day, had now come to take her away.

"It is time we all went away," said Mr. Remington, "and left this man to rest. What are the arrangements for the night, Mason? who is to stay?"

"I can," said Earle Mason, "if that will be agreeable."

Then Dr. Fletcher, who had been having a low-toned conversation with Fern, as she stood beside his chair, turned toward the group of planners and electrified them.

"Good friends, before you go I have a great favor to ask. We were, as you are aware, to have been married at ten o'clock. It is now nearly ten, and we are together, and I do not feel as though we could be separated again. What I ask is that you will all remain with us a few minutes longer, and that Mr. Remington will make us husband and wife."

"Why, my dear Fern!" exclaimed Mrs. Redpath. "Surely you will not, you cannot, dear, be

married under such strange circumstances and in that dress!"

"Yes, I can, mother." Fern's voice was clear and calm. "I feel with Dr. Fletcher, that it is not possible for us to be separated again. I am not going to leave this house to-night, and I should be glad to have the right to stay beside him."

"Amen!" said Earle Mason, in so grave a tone that no other word would have seemed to fit.

"But, my dear child," urged Mrs. Redpath, "what will people say! And the guests, and then the elegant wedding breakfast!"

It was not possible not to smile at this. But Dr. Fletcher laid one hand on his future mother's arm. "My dear mother," he said persuasively, "think what we have been through! Will not the guests forego the pleasure of the marriage ceremony, in view of what we have suffered? As for the 'elegant wedding breakfast,' can we not have it, say day after to-morrow, and bid them all to enjoy it with us? Then we will quietly carry out the other part of the programme and take the twelve o'clock train. I shall be quite ready for a wedding breakfast and journey by that time; but as for separating us in the meantime, we have already borne enough."

"Yes," said Mr. Remington heartily, "I respect your judgment in the matter. Miss Redpath's nerves have certainly borne enough; besides, there is a sort of poetic justice in being married

after all, despite all your enemies have done to prevent it, on the very day and hour which you appointed."

Mrs. Remington, who felt that this conversation had run in grave channels as long as was wise for the nerves of some of them, here interposed.

"Really, dear Mrs. Redpath, you may as well yield; Mr. Remington is evidently resolved upon performing this ceremony himself; I think it gives him great pleasure to take Dr. Oliver's place. But do let me put this bride into white again; the bridal robes are here, and it will not take the bridesmaid and myself ten minutes to arrange them."

So it came to pass that just as the little cathedral clock from its niche in the hall, told in silver tones that it was once more ten o'clock, the bride, white-robed and beautiful, stood beside her pallid bridegroom, and the marriage vows were taken. Surely there was a peculiar solemnity in the minister's tones, and a peculiar fitness in the words: "I pronounce you husband and wife. And what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Not long thereafter, the groomsman took his bridesmaid home in a carriage. Of course, as they rolled through the quiet streets, the startling, constantly varying events of the day were almost of necessity the topic of conversation.

"I do not understand it in detail," said Earle Mason, "but there are circumstances connected with it which lead me to believe that it is an exceedingly complicated piece of business. The illiterate note, the obscure coffee-house and the vile cup of coffee are all in keeping with the low-down class of conspirators; but the exquisite villainy exhibited in the management of the whole after-scene leads me to suspect that another class of mind was the instigator of the whole. Those flowers, Miss Chilton, were exquisite; and all the appointments costly and beautiful, from the standpoint of the society world. It looks to me as though some villain in high life had planned, and by means of money, or threats, or in some other way had secured the co-operation of the lower class. It was the very refinement of villainy, if I may use the term, which planned all that elegant array of horror, and left the victim alone to die."

"I know," said Elsie, catching her breath. "I feel what you mean. It does not seem to me that I can ever again endure the scent of tuberoses, or mignonette, or even the sight of English violets. Wasn't it too awful to place that pillow of flowers at his head! Mr. Mason, do you know, I believe that Aleck Palmer had to do in some way with this whole matter?"

And then Earle Mason experienced such a shock through all his frame as none of the previous occurrences of the day had been able to produce.

In his astonishment he was guilty of repeating her words :

"Aleck Palmer had to do with it! Is it possible that you have any reason for such a statement?"

"No," said Elsie, already ashamed, and realizing for the hundredth time the immense difference between the two men. One could originate a slander against a character which had been above reproach through all the years of its history, the other was shocked at the bare suggestion of such evil, even though he could have no respect for the character of the man whose name she had mentioned.

"I ought not to have said that," Elsie made haste to add; "I thought aloud. But your suggestion that the whole scheme was planned by some one in high life brought it forcibly to mind. Mr. Mason, Aleck Palmer hates this whole subject of Gospel temperance with an extreme hatred. He has hated Fern, and Dr. Fletcher especially I think, since the evening of the temperance rally. I saw him at the reception that evening, with such a strange, fierce scowl upon his face when he looked at them, as might have preceded almost any evil planning. And — he can speak so terribly ill of others, without any provocation, can consider others capable of such awful things, that I feel sometimes as though it might almost justify me in thinking that he himself is capable of them. I

believe him to be a bad man ; and I have reason to think that he would stoop to any form of revenge, against those whom he dislikes, provided there was a fair possibility of his not being discovered."

Mr. Mason was so silent under this avalanche of astounding words as to fairly force from Elsie her next hurried sentences.

"I know, Mr. Mason, you think me cruel, unchristian in my conclusions ; I know I ought not to have spoken as I did, without proof ; but that man has become such an offense to me, I despise his character so utterly, that I could hardly help, under the excitement of the moment, saying what I did."

"I could as soon accuse an angel of being cruel or uncharitable," he said at last, and there was a strange new note in his voice, almost of exultation. "I am simply bewildered, Miss Chilton — overwhelmed ; I have been deceived ; I had supposed, that is, I had been led to think of Mr. Palmer as your nearest and dearest friend ; and I thought that any other than respectful words about him was an insult to you."

Elsie made a little movement almost of impatience, and spoke quickly : "Is it not almost an insult to me, Mr. Mason, that you conceive of a man like the one whom you seated on my father's doorstep while you summoned a policeman to help him home, as being my nearest and dearest friend ?"

"Ah but, I believed you thought him simply

the victim of the sins of others," he said eagerly, "even as Dr. Fletcher was to-day. That is what I thought you had been taught to believe; the circumstances are entirely different, I know; they did not drug Dr. Fletcher with alcoholic poison, they were wise enough to know they could not do that. But I did not know you understood the difference, fully; and indeed, Miss Chilton, I thought I had good authority for my belief; I tell you frankly, I overheard the gentleman himself say that it was an engagement. That it is not so; that I hear from your lips that all this is false, gives me such a feeling to-night as I cannot describe; gives me such a hope as I thought never to have. Elsie, I have been utterly deceived myself; have I deceived others? Is it news to you that there has for years been but one woman in the world to me? That" —

But these two who have blundered so long and so well, who have had innumerable opportunities for enlightening each other, and have but succeeded in plunging themselves into deeper bewilderment, may surely now, toward the midnight of a day so full of excitement, and care, and pain, as this has been, be permitted to have a little quiet conversation to themselves, without any intruding eye to watch, or any inquisitive ear to listen.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SELFISHNESS AND SELF-ABNEGATION.

IT was several days afterwards that Mrs. Remington told as much as she knew of the story to her husband, and confided to him the hope that those two would have peaceable times now, they have had such a bewildering and stormy acquaintance heretofore. "It does seem to me," she had said, with a long-drawn sigh, "that it is time for us all to have a little peace. We have been through seas of trouble and anxiety, and almost everything that can happen, has. If we could only find out the details of that horrible scheme about Dr. Fletcher, and discover what sent Aleck Palmer to Europe at twenty-four hours' notice, I think I should be willing to settle down for a while, and let the outside world alone."

"We cannot let the outside world alone," he had replied gravely. "We must be about our Master's business. There is a great deal of work to be done, and 'the night cometh when no man can work.' I think I must prepare a sermon on that text; it has been with me all day; I have

said it over repeatedly in my study. The night cometh when no man can work."

"You are working too hard," his wife had said, giving him a swift, anxious glance; but he laughed cheerfully. "I? No, I am in my prime. I never felt stronger, or better able to work. I am glad to be a young man yet, and to realize that I have probably long years before me in which I can serve Him. But even to the longest life, Mattie, 'the night cometh.'"

The summer sped away. Mr. Remington and his family went, for the month of August, to the old farm at Maplewood. There they took long walks and drives, and lived over again those earlier days of their life together; and felt that they were a great deal older and wiser; were indeed getting to be middle-aged people who had had "experience." Mrs. Remington confided to her husband that in those early days she had rather longed for the time to come when she might consider herself matronly, and of course, wise!

Little John rolled and tumbled in the hay, frisked with the lambs, fed the chickens, and managed Aunt Hepsy with the skill of a general, and with twice the success that he had, even with Aunt Hannah.

One beautiful Saturday they all drove over to Stony Ridge, and spent the Sabbath; and Mr. Remington preached in the old church which he had helped make new, and compared notes with

"Brother Porter" and cheered that young man's heart with words of commendation and encouragement; and little John spent one entire morning with Mrs. Blake, and his mother was shown the tub which his majesty had insisted on using for a bath on that memorable morning, and the clothes the sallow-faced baby had worn on the night of his arrival, and Mrs. Blake confided to sympathetic ears the pangs of wounded feeling she had suffered over the little shirt; and the two women had laughed, and cried, and kissed little John, and prayed together about it all; and knew that their two hearts were knit together in a bond of affection which death could not sever.

August vanished all too soon. They came back early in September, to the heat, and the cares, and the joys of the city.

Mr. Remington took hold of his work with renewed vigor. He declared that he had a new lease of life, and Dr. Fletcher told him, in a significant tone, that he worked as though he had several leases of life.

Once more Elsie Chilton renewed her frequent visits to the Remington home. Not quite so frequent as they used to be; because she had now to go often to Dr. Fletcher's to keep "Mrs. Professor" company, while her husband attended to his duties in the college.

Apparently, as Mrs. Remington had wished, life had settled, for them all, into quiet lines at last.

BACK IN THEIR CITY HOME.

Page 362.

At least, outwardly. Certainly nothing could be brighter, or calmer, in the truest sense of that word, than Dr. and Mrs. Fletcher's life together.

As for Elsie Chilton, what Mrs. Remington considered the disturbing element in her life, had departed suddenly for Europe. Elsie knew what had hurried him away; her father suspected it, but she kept her own counsel.

It was after the temperance rally which has been described, and before the day appointed for Fern Redpath's marriage, that she received a communication from Mr. Palmer, dignified and somewhat haughty. In it he informed her that he confessed to some astonishment over the treatment he was receiving at her hands, having looked upon her as the very embodiment of refined Christianity. He had explained to her in detail the manner in which he had fallen victim to a conspiracy against him; he had hinted that he knew who the chief conspirator was, and had only refrained from mentioning his name, out of motives of courtesy to her, since she had been so unfortunate as to number him among her acquaintances. He had failed to hint what he strongly suspected: that jealousy was the ruling motive prompting the villainous act, because he himself had the honor to be known as her friend. It seemed strange indeed to him, that having made all possible explanations, and borne much in silence, in order to shield her from unpleasant notoriety, he should be treated so coldly,

so — if the lady in question were anybody but Miss Chilton he would have to say — discourteously. Would she kindly inform him what further concession she demanded at his hands? In what way could he show that he was willing to serve not only her, but her father, to the extent of his poor ability?

If he had not been plain-spoken enough in the past, if she would afford him opportunity he should be only too glad to express himself with utmost plainness. He had supposed that there was an implied understanding between them; that of course the old friendship was as strong as ever. If he had been misunderstood, or if there was anything which he could do to make his position, and his intentions perfectly plain to Miss Chilton, he was prepared to do it, but he felt that he had the right of a gentleman to demand that he should be treated with ordinary courtesy. So long as she chose to frown upon every attempt on his part to see and converse with her, what could he be expected to do?

This long, rambling, and in some respects, contradictory letter was read hurriedly by Elsie, and responded to promptly, with unmistakable plainness:

"Miss Chilton declines to hold any further communication with Mr. Palmer, either by letter or conversation, upon this subject or any other, from this time forth."

Within a very few days thereafter Mr. Palmer had sailed for Europe. There were, however, other reasons for his sudden departure, best understood by himself. Elsie Chilton's rash statement charging him with complicity in the crime connected with Dr. Fletcher, had more foundation than he would have cared to own. Not that he had lent himself deliberately, or in any sense of the word openly, to such a disgraceful proceeding; nevertheless, he was unpleasantly conscious that the conception of the whole plan might possibly be traced to him. He had certainly felt bitterly angry against Dr. Fletcher for taking care to make a public and detailed statement to the effect that only those who were habitual users of stimulants could be the subject of practical jokes. It is true Dr. Fletcher did not make any such statement, but it was easy to imagine he had; also he was angry with Dr. Fletcher on general principles, as a man who was succeeding in the plan of life which he had mapped out for himself, and as one of a certain clique which, by tacit consent, had shut him out; that Elsie Chilton belonged to that clique, was the sore point.

The "scowl" which had seemed to Elsie a forerunner of evil, had indeed accompanied evil thoughts. Mr. Palmer, remembering his own disgrace; which was certainly known to at least two persons belonging to that clique — and he could not be sure to how many more — felt an

almost consuming desire to make the immaculate Dr. Fletcher a marked victim to the skill of practical jokers.

He went directly from the reception to a certain club meeting which was composed of young men who had money enough, and drank high-priced liquors enough to make them dare to undertake anything, and reported as much of the conversation he had overheard as he chose, together with quotations, highly colored by his imagination, from the evening's addresses by Fern Redpath and Dr. Fletcher. He knew that these society young men were sufficiently under the influence of liquor at the moment to deeply resent what they would call the insult to their set; then, when he had produced the right impression, he admitted that such people ought to be taught a lesson, and related a striking instance of "getting the better" of a certain man who considered himself above the common lot of mortals. The boys were deeply interested in the story; noisily applauded some portions of it, and openly declared that they should like to see that "piece of perfection who considered it his business to go around giving public lectures about them, come up with" in some way. Then they actually fell to discussing how it could be managed; and some one suggested that Joe Patterson and his set could manage the dirty part; they were up to any kind of mean work that could be imagined, and hated

the temperance ring with all their hearts; and then Mr. Palmer had excused himself in some haste, and gone away. As he reflected upon all this afterwards, it made the color flame into his face to think how startlingly like the incident he had told, were some of the details of Dr. Fletcher's experience. Only of course the fellows blundered. Who had supposed they would be so reckless as to narrowly escape causing the death of their victim? He had not dreamed of such a result. But suppose for a moment that some of the bunglers should be caught — and there was every reason to fear it; that Mason fellow was quick-witted and long-brained, and meant to succeed; and suppose a detailed account of his conversation in the club room that night should actually come into court? It would have an ugly sound. Of course a man could not be arrested because he had talked carelessly with a party of half-drunken fellows, but it certainly would not comport with his dignity to be cross-questioned, for instance; perhaps by Earle Mason himself. Horrible! After giving heed to that thought for the space of a minute, Mr. Palmer hastened his departure from the country, and planned to make his stay indefinite.

Mr. Chilton's affairs went swiftly toward their consummation. Disaster was in the air. Almost ruin looked the troubled man in the face. Then arose a most unexpected deliverer. A business

man of undoubted integrity, whose name was a power in the business world, but with whom Mr. Chilton had had very little in common, came suddenly forward and volunteered the use of his name to an almost unlimited extent. He would make no explanations as to the reason for this strange conduct, and laughed at Mr. Chilton's embarrassed and voluble efforts to be sufficiently grateful.

"Why, man," he said heartily, "there is no occasion for such deep gratitude. I understand the situation perfectly. I do not expect to lose a cent by you. I am an old man, and have been through all these stages of depression and anxiety. I have been able to look into your affairs somewhat, and I see plain sailing for you in the future, with a little management just now; therefore I offer the helping hand. It is no more than any man of common sense, who had the money lying idle, would be willing to do. It is a business transaction, done in a friendly way. There is nothing incongruous between business and friendship, Mr. Chilton."

And the bewildered man of business did not know then, though he did long afterwards, that the merchant prince was the devoted friend and admirer, I might almost say lover of the young lawyer, Earle Mason. It hardly need be added that he was also a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ordered his business life, as well as all

his other concerns, under the guidance of that master mind. So the financial crash was averted, and Mr. Chilton "floated through" without the aid of Aleck Palmer, greatly, it must be confessed, to that gentleman's bewilderment and chagrin. Nevertheless, this did not make "smooth sailing" for his daughter. Obstinacy was Mr. Chilton's ruling passion. She had thwarted him, this one child of his; had overset the darling plans of his lifetime. His fortune was saved to him and to her, but the magnificent estates which might have been joined to his were lost, simply through her obstinacy. Since she would not marry Aleck Palmer — and he discovered at last that this was precisely what his daughter meant — she certainly should not marry, with his consent, that "upstart of a lawyer," who had his own way to make in the world, with nothing to fall back upon, and who had made all the trouble between the other two.

They had had upon this subject, he and his daughter, what Mr. Chilton called some "plain English." At which time he informed her that, as she had chosen to upset all his plans, of course there was nothing to be done but to take the consequences. He meant to be perfectly frank with her. That Mason fellow had had the impudence to ask his permission to address her, for which he was glad, as it gave him an opportunity to tell him what he thought of him. If Elsie had decided to remain at home, he was entirely willing; it would

probably be more pleasant to have her in the house than out of it, and he had enough to support her; but as for her marrying that Mason fellow, she must understand, once for all, that she would have to choose between them. She was of age, and could no doubt do as she pleased; but so could he. From the hour when she should marry that person, she might understand that he would have no more to do with her than if they were total strangers. Miss Chilton he was willing to support, but Mrs. Mason never!

His daughter listened very quietly. There was perhaps an added pallor to her face, but no surprise in look or manner. She understood her father, better than he thought. When at last he gave her an opportunity to speak, her voice was very quiet.

"Papa," she said, "you have certainly spoken very plainly; I will do the same. If you care to have me with you, and I think you do, I will promise never to leave you; never to marry any one without your full and free consent. I have known for a long time that there was only one person whom I could ever marry, and that person is Mr. Mason. But I can remain unmarried, and if that will give you a little comfort, papa, I shall be glad to stay with you always; and I will try to be as good a daughter to you as I can. I am sorry I had to act contrary to your wish, for I love you, papa, with all my heart; and I am willing to

prove it by giving up my way for your sake. I had to disappoint you, because to do other than I did, feeling as I did, would have been a sin; but you may understand now, that from this time I belong to you; and I will not trouble you about this matter again."

Then she had stooped over the chair in which he was sitting, and touched her lips ever so lightly to his forehead, and gone away.

Mr. Chilton sat there for an hour, feeling like a brute. Indeed, he frankly called himself a selfish man; more selfish than he had ever supposed he could be. Yet so carefully had he trained himself to have his own way in the world, so persistently had he refused to yield his plans in the smallest degree to others, that he presently accepted the condition of things as one accustomed to ruling, and arose at last to go to his business, feeling that his troubles were well over, and that if Elsie would settle down and be happy, they could have a pleasanter life, on the whole, than would have been possible with Palmer as a husband and son, dictating to them both. And so absorbed was he with his business, that I do not think he realized how completely he had crushed the blossoms along his daughter's path. There were two who realized it, however; and there was one woman who did not hesitate to tell Elsie that she believed she had done wrong in yielding thus to her father's unreasonable prejudices; but Earle

Mason never told her so. "She must be true to her conscience," he told himself with a long-drawn sigh. "God forbid that I should ever come between a soul and its duty, as the Lord Jesus Christ reveals it."

As soon as the autumn evenings were of sufficient length, Mr. Remington carried out one of his plans, which had been maturing all summer. That was to institute a series of Gospel temperance meetings, beginning in his church. He called to his assistance a noted temperance worker, a man of energy and power, and one whose experience as a worker had been among some of the hardest classes to be found in large cities.

Finding, after a brief experience, that many of the hard characters whom he was trying to reach could not be induced to enter a church building, Mr. Remington rented a hall in the heart of the city, Mr. Hargrave, Dr. Fletcher and others of their stamp rallying around him for this purpose. Then began aggressive temperance work, in a locality which was surrounded on all sides by saloons of almost every type.

That the work was owned and honored of the Master could be proven any night by watching the groups of blear-eyed, red-faced, fallen human beings who tarried to the after-meeting, or lingered about the door to have a word with Mr. Remington, or rose up to be prayed for when the

invitation was given. Among those half-intoxicated and wholly miserable who shuffled forward one evening and knelt around the platform, having been asked to give that indication of their desire to begin a new life, was one whom Earle Mason noticed with a start which had dismay in it as well as surprise. He was standing in the aisle, waiting to speak a word to some one who he knew was weighing the question whether he should move or not, when the fellow stumbled past him. He leaned forward with one eager glance at the hard face, then bending to Mrs. Remington, who occupied an aisle chair near him, said in an undertone:

"The one who just passed you is Dan Stokes."

Now Dan Stokes was a name which had power to bring terror to Mrs. Remington's soul. It was the name of the man for whom they had been looking so long and persistently. It was the name of the man who, they believed, had planned and carried out the capture of little John.

The mother's face was white with pain as the thought of those awful days, when she had lived without knowledge of her baby's whereabouts, returned to her; and she leaned forward and gazed with frightened eyes at the fellow for whom they had been so long hunting.

"Are you sure?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"Very sure," answered Earle Mason; "I knew the fellow quite well by sight. I wonder that he has dared to show his face here! Look! the poor

wretch is kneeling, and Mr. Remington is talking with him. I do not suppose he has the least idea who it is; but the fellow must know who is bending over him; though perhaps not, he is partially intoxicated. Mrs. Remington, I feel very much like sending for an officer and arresting him at once. Shall I do so?"

"No," came from Mrs. Remington's grave lips; "not now; not yet, at least. I do not know. How can we tell but the Lord is speaking to him? Look! my husband has dropped on his knees beside him, and is praying for him."

For the remainder of the evening Mrs. Remington had eyes only for Dan Stokes. She watched him with a frightened face and a fluttering at her heart which she could not control. She noticed that her husband kept him in sight, even after he had risen and stepped back a little from the platform. At intervals Mr. Remington would turn and speak a few words to him. When the meeting closed, as the minister caught sight of his wife, he motioned her forward. Mr. Mason, who had seen his call, made a way for her through the aisle, and followed her.

"Do you know who you have here?" he asked, speaking low to the minister, with a significant movement of his head toward Dan Stokes, who stood with hands in his pockets and eyes on the floor, noticing no one, and seeming like the very embodiment of despair.

"Yes," said Mr. Remington, in clear tones, "I know. Mattie, I want your advice. What can we do with this man? He is terribly tempted; he does not dare to go out of this building; he does not dare to promise that he will get to his attic to-night without going into some of these saloons. He is urged on by an awful appetite which makes him long for drink in a way that you and I cannot understand; he is urged on by boon companions, who are determined that he shall not reform. And yet he wants to, I can feel that he does. Do you know who he is, dear? Has Mason told you? Well, what is there I can do for him? If I had an asylum where I could take him for a few days, and stand by him and help him fight this battle out, he might come off conqueror in the name of Jesus Christ. But there is no place in this city for such sorely tried souls as his."

"Bring him home," said Mrs. Remington, her voice firm and resolute. "Bring him home, John, and we will help — Aunt Hannah and little John and I."

"God bless my wife!" said Mr. Remington, and now his voice quivered. Then, observing that his friend had heard every word, "What is such a wife as that worth, Mason? Will you go and get a carriage for me, large enough to hold my family and Dan Stokes — and yourself; come with us, will you?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE NIGHT COMETH."

"WE have had a hard fight," said Aunt Hannah a few days afterwards, as she sewed bright buttons all over little John's kilt suit, and told the story of Dan Stokes and his experiences to Elsie Chilton; "a real downright hard fight all around. Dan Stokes has been fought for by all the demons in the pit, ever since he has been in the house. My John — bless him — did not leave the fellow day or night for forty-eight hours; and I believe he has come off conqueror; or rather Jesus Christ has. It has been a strange experience, Elsie; the strangest feeling I ever had in my life, was when I knelt down in this room last night at family worship, and heard Dan Stokes try to pray! It was real praying, too; there was a good deal of stammering about it, of course; but I sometimes think stammerings get translated up there into language that would astonish us. You ought to have heard him pray for little John!"

And then Aunt Hannah's voice broke, and she stopped to wipe away the tears. "It beats all how

that little fellow takes to him ! he has just petted him all day long ; showed him his horses, and his 'toot ! toot ! ' and his soldiers, and all his pictures, and I don't know what not. He has patted his hand, and brushed the hair out of his eyes, and actually kissed his great rough face ! That broke Dan Stokes' heart outright. He just put down his head and cried like a baby ; and little John said, 'Poor man, poor sorry man ! don't cry.'

"We have all had a victory," continued Aunt Hannah, as Elsie wiped her eyes suspiciously, "Jane and I among the others," and she glanced around at Jane, whose face grew red as she bent over the grate she was brushing, but who answered the glance with an appreciative smile. "We couldn't stand Dan Stokes at first, either of us. Jane said she 'couldn't abide him' ; she should go wild with fear if he staid in the house all night. And I felt a good deal so myself, though I made up his bed. But I took off the white spread, and the white toilet things on the bureau, and put them away. I wasn't going to stand having Dan Stokes touch any of them. And she came in, don't you think, and put the white spread on again, and fixed the toilet things, and added some more to them, and put flowers in the vase."

"Jane did ?" interrupted Elsie in surprise.

"Jane, child ! no ; Martha of course ; the guardian angel of this household. She fixed things all up again as nice as she could have done for her

own mother; then she put her arms around my neck and kissed me. Says she, 'It is for His sake, dear Aunt Hannah; you know He died for Dan Stokes! and I cannot forget it.' I'll be bound if I hadn't forgotten it outright; it all came over me like a flash how He would have managed; and here I wasn't willing for him to have the white spread on his bed! Well, as I say, we are all conquered. When little John kissed him, that was the end of it for me; and it was about the end of it for him too, I guess. I never saw a man cry so in my life. I made up my mind that if Jesus Christ can save Dan Stokes — and I believe he has — there is no limit to his power."

Truly He was making his power visible during the days which followed. Dan Stokes, clean-shaven, cleanly dressed, standing up in the Gospel temperance meetings and declaring in plain, simple words that the Lord Jesus Christ had met him on the way, and saved his soul and given him a refuge from his enemy, was testimony that could not be withstood. "God bless you!" said Philip King holding his hand in a firm grasp one evening. "You've got hold of the right helper, Brother Stokes; He will carry you through, provided you trust Him entirely. You know me, don't you? I was a worse drunkard than you; lower down, in a sense, for I had better opportunities in life to sin against. I tried all sorts of reforms; and I couldn't reform any more than a drowning man can keep

himself from drowning. Then I tried Jesus Christ half-way; partly I trusted in him, and partly I trusted in the good resolutions of Philip King; that was a failure; good resolutions unless they are built on the Rock Christ Jesus, are walls of sand. Then I tried him in a way which I now know to be presumption: I walked into temptation, when I could have gone the other way, and expected him to save me; Stokes, I don't believe he will ever do it. There is a sense in which the Lord expects us to do our part; and our part is that which we can do; you and I know there are places where we cannot do; and those he looks after. Do you get my meaning?"

"Aye," said Dan Stokes, brushing away the tears, "I understand; and I mean to keep out of temptation just as much as I can in this awful world; it is an awful world for fellows like me, now isn't it? I have to pass seventeen saloons on my way home from work. But I know what you mean; they told me you got tempted inside the church walls. I won't have that to fight against. I'm going to be in Mr. Remington's church, sir, and he won't have no temptation of that kind in any church where he goes. Maybe you don't know him?"

"Indeed I do!" answered Philip King, his eyes lighting. "I know him, Stokes; but only the Lord himself knows all that he has done for me."

"That's it," said Dan Stokes; "words won't tell

it, they won't; but I'm going to give my life, I am, to showing him and his wife, and his boy, that they have saved me. It is the greatest wonder to me yet, that they could care to have me saved; but they did — even the little fellow. 'Poor sorry man!' he said, 'don't cry,'" and then Dan Stokes got out his clean white handkerchief and wiped away the tears.

Two more wonderful weeks passed; the Gospel temperance meetings were still in full tide of power, when Mr. Remington left them one evening in charge of others, and went to answer a call to another part of the city, where there was a political rally.

"Gospel temperance is all very well," said the man who had come to urge for his help, "I believe in it with all my soul; you know that, as well as anybody; but so do the saloon men, if you don't go any farther. That is, they are willing you should pray a good deal, and sing as many gospel hymns as you please; they can even stand the conversion of Dan Stokes and a few fellows like him, who have spent all their money in the saloons; they are willing to tolerate all this if you will let their votes alone. They are more or less mad, it is true, at all temperance workers, on general principles; but the people for whom they have a downright and ever-increasing dislike, to put it mildly, are the people who touch the political side of this question. They don't understand

the power of prayer, and are therefore not so much afraid of it; but the power of a vote they can appreciate; just as long as they can keep the praying on one side, and the voting on the other, they consider themselves comparatively safe."

But Mr. Remington, in his speech that night, by no means kept "the praying on one side, and the voting on the other." "Vote as you pray," might almost have been said to be the text of the sermon he preached. A strong, keen, logical sermon, addressed to keen-brained men, voters, every one of them; men who listened intently, and weighed carefully the problems which he presented before them, and the facts and figures with which he clinched his arguments.

The man who had called for him walked back with him to the hall when his twenty minutes' speech was concluded.

"You did some good work for the cause tonight, Mr. Remington," he said. "That speech will give us a dozen more votes at least, I believe; and we are getting where a dozen more votes will tell. We are gaining on the enemy, Mr. Remington, as sure as the world! If we could only have all the church members with us, how quickly we would sweep this curse out of the land!"

"Yes," said Mr. Remington, and he could not forbear a sigh. Even in his own beloved church there were men who loved him, and prayed with, and for him, and who worked earnestly in the

Gospel temperance meetings, and were honest to the heart's core, he knew, yet who would in a few days go to the polls and array themselves against him, and on the side of the saloons which he and they were fighting.

"It is very strange," he said. "It is the problem of the centuries how to understand the honest Christian people of our country on this question. There is nothing like it; we see eye to eye on every other moral question under the sun. I do not understand it; the utmost that I can do is to work and pray and wait. I am willing to do the working and praying," he added with a slight laugh, "but there are some of my people for whom it seems hard to wait."

"I know it," answered his friend; "I know precisely how you feel. I have a brother, as good a man as ever lived; as good as gold, and as square as he can be on all other questions, as you say; but when it comes to this, there isn't a bat in the world as blind as he. It is unaccountable to me, except on the principle that the 'god of this world has blinded his eyes.' When I get to thinking about it, and get all wrought up, as you have wrought me up to-night, Mr. Remington, by your speech, the only language in which I can express myself is the old cry, 'O, Lord! how long?'" Then they reached the door of the hall where the temperance meeting was still in progress, and shook hands and separated. A few steps away,

then the gentleman turned and called out: "Oh! hold on, Brother Remington. I forgot one or two things. Do you have service to-morrow evening?"

"Yes, sir; service every evening," said Mr. Remington, in exultant tone; these Gospel meetings held night after night, with as much persistence as the saloons, were his soul's delight.

"Can you get away and go down to the South End for a few minutes' talk, such as you have given to-night?"

"O, yes! I can go for a little while; I have good helpers in these meetings."

"All right; thank you. And how about Sunday? Can you give us a little Gospel temperance talk, say fifteen minutes or so, at the South End Mission; for the young people — the boys — who will be voters in another year or two, you know?"

"Yes," said Mr. Remington, again speaking heartily; "yes, I can; I am glad to speak to the boys, every chance I can get; the boys who will vote in a year, or two, or three, are the hope of our country to-day. Your meeting is at four, is it not? I will be there, if nothing unforeseen prevents."

It was nearly two hours later when Mr. Remington was taking swift strides up the street, making all speed to catch the last car which would go out his way that night. The meeting had been long closed, but he had tarried to have a little after-

meeting talk with half a dozen evil-looking men, who yet looked better this night than they had before in months, some of them in years; in that they were nearly sober, and had within them a weak longing after a better life. Two of them, in particular, held Mr. Remington late; their lines in life were hard; they had families — little children; they were very poor; they were weak in body, through long dissipation; unable to work much, had work been at their hands; they needed good food, and care, and kindness, and patience, such as Jesus Christ, had he been on earth, would, without question, have bestowed; and Mr. Remington, who was coming into daily and hourly contact with just such cases, felt at times almost in despair, because Jesus Christ, in the person of his Church, was willing to do so little for such as these. Since the world was what it was, how were such as these to be saved?

He took a cross-cut through one of the darker by-streets of the city, revolving the problem as he went. How to meet the needs of these men, who with feeble effort were reaching toward reform? How tide them over the gulf which lay between them and respectability? How steer them past the many open doors of saloons wooing them with brilliant lights, and sounds of laughter and good cheer, and odors which enticed them in a way that men like himself could not understand.

"If I only had a house," he said aloud, "a home

of my own that I could make into a sort of earthly refuge for even a few of them at a time, and tide them over! If we had a home in which to put a man like Philip King, what could not he and his wife and little Carroll do for tempted souls? Oh, for some of the millions which are being wasted in this city! If I could have" — but the sentence was never finished. He had been conscious for several minutes of steps behind him, moving rapidly as he did, crossing streets when he crossed; vaguely conscious of it, not attaching any special importance to it.

He halted near a street lamp and drew his watch to time himself as to the probability of his securing that last car. He was but two blocks away from it now, and the footsteps gained on him. He struck into an alley, which would take him by a still shorter route to the avenue. The footsteps followed him. It was just as he said to himself, "If I could have," that there came the sharp report of a pistol shot startling the quiet air; and then another following it in quick succession. But apparently there had been no need of that second one; for with the first Mr. Remington had fallen to the ground. The alley was dark and deserted; the footsteps that had dogged him had no difficulty in turning and fleeing in the direction whence they had come. They were lost even to sound by the time the policeman, stationed near the corner, could reach the spot, though he made

all speed in the direction of the sound which had startled him.

As he bent over the prostrate man he uttered an exclamation of dismay:

"It's the preacher!" Then he whistled for help.

At the parsonage, Mrs. Remington and her friends were quietly awaiting the home-coming of the head of the house. Mrs. Remington had not been down to the evening meeting, and Elsie Chilton, who was spending several days with her, had been attended home from the first meeting by Earle Mason. Dr. and Mrs. Fletcher were also there, having driven out after the service, to enjoy a few minutes' chat.

"We ought not to have come out here to-night," said Dr. Fletcher, consulting his watch; "of course we knew we would stay too late, if we came. But I thought Mr. Remington would be at home before this, and I wanted to see him a moment about that committee work he has set me at."

"He meant to be at home early," said Mrs. Remington; "he said he meant to plan to work a little in the study this evening; he is not ready for the Sabbath, and expects an unusually busy day to-morrow with outside duties. Something extra must have occurred to detain him so late to-night."

"Those half-dozen men who went into the second meeting are the unexpected detentions, de-

pend upon it," answered Earle Mason. "One of them is a fellow for whom he has been watching and praying for weeks; he enjoys the reputation of being one of the hardest cases in the city. He will need a great deal of help and care, to-night, I presume. I suspect I ought to have staid to see what I could do towards caring for him; but I was too sorely tempted." This last in undertone, with a smile for Elsie. There were times when this young man thought that the lines of his life were fallen in hard places. The woman he loved, and who loved him, was as hopelessly shut away from him as ever she had been. He did not feel at liberty to visit her in her father's house; at least, he did not feel comfortable in doing so, and they were, most of the time, dependent upon chance meetings at Mr. Remington's or at Dr. Fletcher's. Mrs. Remington was greatly tried about the whole matter. "It is perfectly unnatural," she assured her husband, "and the whole thing will have to be righted in some way. I don't know how, I am sure. I do not want Mr. Chilton to die, and yet" — here she came to a sudden stop.

"And yet, my dear, you could consent to even that affliction for the good of the cause! Is that your meaning?" her husband had asked, smiling.

"No; but really, John, something ought to be done; two lives like theirs ought not to be wasted in that way."

"Something will be done," he had answered.

"In His own good time all that is wrong will be righted, Mattie dear; we must trust Him for Elsie as well as for ourselves."

It was growing very late. Dr. Fletcher looked again at his watch and starting up, announced that they must go at once. "And by the way," he added, "there goes the last up-town car for the night. Was not Mr. Remington coming in it?"

"There is no accounting for Mr. Remington," Earle Mason answered lightly. "He doubtless thinks he is, but in nine cases out of ten it is my opinion that he loses the last car, and has to come on foot; which will be my fate if I tarry longer."

"Hark!" said Mrs. Remington, "some one is coming; that must be John. Why! there are several coming up the steps. Do you suppose he has brought the 'half-dozen' home with him? If he has, you must all stay and help get them settled for the night."

By this time, Dr. Fletcher, who had been standing near the window, uttered an exclamation, and started for the hall, followed closely by Earle Mason. Mrs. Remington looked after them in surprise, turned one bewildered glance upon Mrs. Fletcher and Elsie, and asked, "Do they think anything is wrong?" Then she too went toward the hall in time to see the tall forms of two policemen carrying something very tenderly in their strong arms.

"He is not dead," said Dr. Fletcher, turning

hastily toward her; "he has been injured, and has fainted from loss of blood. You must be very brave, Mrs. Remington; you are needed to care for him."

And it was Mrs. Remington who led the way up stairs, and prepared the bed, and brought scissors, and wet cloths, and restoratives, and obeyed swiftly and silently the brief hurried directions of the doctor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE UPPER CHAMBER.

"WILL he die?" asked Mrs. Fletcher, clutching at her husband's arm as soon as she could get speech with him. "Paul, is it a mortal wound?"

"I do not know, dear, yet; I cannot tell." He was hurriedly writing a few lines on a piece of paper as he spoke, and now handed it to Earle Mason. "Take my carriage," he said, "and I need not tell you to make all speed. This note will explain to my assistant boy what is needed. Bring Thurston back with you, and Delafield if you can find him."

The gray dawn of the November morning was creeping in at the eastern window before Dr. Fletcher turned from his charge with a faint smile for the wife who had been speechless, tearless and efficient during all those terrible hours, watching, waiting for, she knew not what!

"We hope he will live, Mrs. Remington," he said. "We have not dared to say so before."

"Mamma!" called a wondering voice at the

chamber door, and little John in his white woollen gown, his curls all in a lovely tangle, and his face with the flush of sleep still upon it, looked in with astonished eyes upon the scene. His mother made haste to him, gathered him in her arms, buried her face in his curls and wet them with the first tears which had come to relieve her burning eyes during all the night vigil.

Yes, he lived. But it was days before they were sure of it; long, terrible days and more terrible nights; when the valuable life hung in the balance, and it seemed as if a hair's breadth would turn the scales. During all this time, excitement ran high in the city; men of all shades of belief and unbelief united to express their horror of the crime; and gathered in groups, and in societies and in clubs to discuss the terrible questions of "How?" and "Why?" They organized vigilance committees whose avowed purpose it was to seek the murderer and bring him to justice. Resolutions were passed by the dozen; and indignant men declared that the thought that such deeds were possible was a disgrace to civilization; and said that the would-be-murderer was drunk, of course; no man in the possession of his senses would ever have been guilty of such a cold-blooded, cowardly, unprovoked outrage as that. And then they voted, some of them, some of these very men, and within a few days' time, to license more liquor saloons! Not all of them; not all even of those

who had been in the habit of voting the license ticket were counted on that side in the election.

The first bit of news Earle Mason ventured to tell the wounded man was that the Ward about which he had felt most anxious, and for which he had worked the hardest, had had a temperance victory in the late election. "Directly traceable to your address that night," he added eagerly. "The vote was close, and if three men, who it is said changed their views that night, had not done so, we should have lost it." And then he wondered if he should add another item of news, to the effect that the mystery connected with the assault upon Dr. Fletcher was solved, and the leading conspirators were now awaiting trial. He reflected that he would not; there was an element of pain in that bit of news; two of the men were those for whom Mr. Remington had prayed and worked much. Of course they ought to be punished for their crime; but it was the old story; if they had not been "in liquor" they would never have been guilty of such a deed. What need to tell the man who had tried so hard to save them, of the depth of their fall. "It is really Aleck Palmer who ought to suffer in their stead," the young lawyer muttered. For the developments connected with the trial were to be fully as disgraceful as that European gentleman had imagined they might be.

Mr. Remington lived; but what a shattered life it was!

The first time his wife was told of it, that the beautiful strong limb, which had been swift to go with its fellow upon errands of love and mercy all these years, must be cut away as the only hope of saving the precious life, she shut herself into her own private room for hours. She did not dare to look upon her husband's face, she could not even take little John in her arms ; she had to go away and be alone with Christ, and fight the battle out with her rebellious breaking heart. How could she have him in his strong young manhood, in the full glory of his successful work, broken and maimed before her — a cripple for life ! Yes, more than a cripple ; she had known for several days that the spine was injured, and that the doctors feared he might not walk in a long, long time.

Now he could never walk ; except possibly to hobble around on crutches, and even that was very doubtful. Her brave strong athlete, in whose unusual strength she had so gloried, to be shot down in the night by a drunken wretch, one of those whom he was spending his life to save. How could she have it so ? How could this Christian nation tolerate the curse which had made such an experience possible ? Nay, there was a harder battle than that to fight : the poor hard-pressed trembling woman was assaulted even on her knees by the powers of darkness gathering under the banner of that one awful question : How could God be good and have it so ? Why, why had he let

this horror of suffering and helplessness come upon his young willing servant?

She came off victor! oh! you know that. He never leaves his own, for the enemy to vanquish. But she had to fight the battle on her knees, in bitterness of soul; and to cry out, again and again: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

She came out from that closed room a victorious woman, and answered the smile on her husband's face and his murmured, "Mattie darling, it is all right?" with a steady, "Yes; it is all right;" and added with a sort of solemn triumph in her voice, "And they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

The weeks went by; the sacrifice was made, and by Christmas time the wreck of the once splendid form, with his right leg gone, and his left arm partially paralyzed, and his back too weak to sit erect, could yet rest among the pillows of the curiously constructed chair planned for such as he, and smile, and visit with his friends, and inquire after the Cause. He was full of cheer; the lightest-hearted one, apparently, of all the group that gathered around him.

"He has never once broken down," said Mrs. Remington to Elsie, "neither before Aunt Hannah nor myself. He has never spoken other than cheerfully, I might almost say joyfully of his future. He begins the day with a merry word for little John, and ends it with a prayer of thanks-

giving for mercies; in a strain as cheery as though his life did not stretch out before him with all its hopes and plans crushed. My husband is a perpetual wonder to me."

Earle Mason heard the words, but made no sign that he could tell a different story. He had seen Mr. Remington once, when he had broken down. They were alone together, and had been quiet for some minutes, when the minister had said suddenly, "'The night cometh when no man can work;' I was writing a sermon on that text when my night came. I am not to preach any more!" Then he had closed his eyes, and one by one the tears had followed each other slowly down his face. And Earle Mason had felt that he had not a word to say; that there were no human words which would not sound like mockery. He had walked to the window, both to hide his own tears, and to let Mr. Remington feel that he was not being watched. Only a few moments afterwards he had heard the voice of the sick man again with the quiver gone out of it.

"Forgive me, Brother Mason, and come back; I did not mean to hurt you so. What matters it, dear brother? I can pray — thank the Lord I can pray! and there are others who can preach; the Lord does not need me in my pulpit — does not want me there, or he would have spared me. Surely I do not want to preach against his will."

"There is some one preaching," Earle Mason

had told him a few days after this, "of whom you will be glad to hear. Philip King has spoken every night this week at the South Side Mission; spoken grandly; he has a great power over those poor fellows. They are rallying around him, and he is throwing himself with all his soul into the work. He says he must help fill your place as much as he can, Brother Remington."

"Thank the Lord!" said Mr. Remington heartily; "my ministry of pain is bearing fruit already, then. Philip King has rare power in that direction. He will reach men whom I could not; if I have been permitted to start him in his work, the Lord has been very good to me."

"You are especially privileged, Mrs. Remington," Dr. Fletcher said to her one day, as he came out from the large bright room where by degrees they were gathering all sunny and beautiful things with which to surround their beloved. "You are especially privileged: you can spend your days with a Christian martyr; one of the most beautiful witnesses to the power of the religion of Jesus Christ that I have seen in all my experience."

"Yes," said Earle Mason, as the two walked down the street together, having gone two blocks in utter silence; "yes, that is a good name for him; 'John Remington, Martyr.' I will tell you a good text to accompany the name: 'It must needs be that offenses come, but woe unto that man by whom they come!' If the Christian world

had done its duty, there would have been no need for such martyrdom, Dr. Fletcher."

It is a marvelous thing, when one stops to think of it, how soon life can accommodate itself to great and startling changes. Before the new year was a month old, it might almost have seemed that in the Remington home there had always been a large, sunny room, furnished with special reference to a permanent occupant, and an invalid chair, and a man in the prime of life, with a pale face and one nearly helpless arm, and one foot resting on the cushion arranged for it, always sitting there, with books and papers and writing material convenient to his touch.

They were not to move from the parsonage, as in the first bewildering days it had been supposed of course they would have to do. Mr. Hargrave and two or three others had attended to that. Instead, the young minister who had been called to fill the vacant pulpit, had been installed in the home as one of the family; welcomed with rare delight by every member of it, especially by little John, who, it was declared, acted precisely as though he remembered him! And really there was, perhaps, nothing so very strange about that, for had not Mr. Porter given him devoted and undivided attention for one long-to-be-remembered day? And had he not declared that he would like to adopt the boy for his very own? For all practical pur-

poses, it was an adoption. At least, the reverend gentleman became little John's most devoted and submissive slave; trying in a way which certainly had its pathetic side, to do for the boy all that a strong-limbed, active, thoughtful father might have been supposed to do.

Neither was there necessity for any especially anxious hours concerning the future. "We haven't got bread and clothes to worry about, anyhow," Aunt Hannah had said. "We have enough, child, for all of us, until little John gets old enough to take care of us. It is all yours, of course; whose would it be?"

But it was soon found that the brave little church had taken care of that matter; and had voted to the disabled pastor a life-salary, to be paid in regular quarterly installments.

"I am young to be a senior pastor," he had said with a brave smile to Mr. Porter, when they conferred together. And he had been answered with a smile as bright as his own.

"Yes, we are young men together; I am but a trifle younger than you are yourself, and together we will shoulder this church, Brother Remington, and make it a power for God in the world. You are the senior pastor — that is the church's vote — and I am the co-pastor. I rejoiced in the vote; it is as it should be. I glory in the union. And I warn you, brother, I expect to lean upon you; for although you are not much older in years, you are,

you remember, in experience; and you have had rare success with this church. And besides, brother, do you not think that to those whom the Lord calls to witness for him in the baptism of suffering, he gives a double portion of his spirit?"

So, all things considered, there was a great deal of sunshine in the upper room, beyond that which the grand luminary in the sky made for it. And the brave man in his chair took up his long laid aside literary work again; began to study, and think, and write, with a view to reaching the outside world through his pen, since he could not longer by his voice. He said one day to Mr. Mason, with that rarely sweet smile of his: "I do not know but I am to preach, brother, after all; I have been lying here this afternoon and thinking of the little word I wrote about Christ last week, which is in the newspaper to-day, and which thousands of people may have read by next week this time. I made it a sermon straight from my heart; perhaps the Master will let me preach it to a larger congregation than I could ever have reached from the pulpit."

One evening, Mrs. Remington, having presided over the dainty dinner which had been sent upstairs, and which little John and his father enjoyed together — that graceless young man if he thought anything about it, doubtless rejoicing that at last there had been a rival dinner table set up which he was permitted to honor with his presence —

had come downstairs to do the honors of the table spread in the dining-room; for both Earle Mason and Elsie Chilton were her guests that evening. Just as the dinner bell sounded its summons, the doorbell was also heard.

"Go down to dinner, Aunt Hannah, please, with our friends," Mrs. Remington said; "I will wait and see what is wanted; if it should be some one to see John I shall have to attend to it, you know."

So they had all gone downstairs while she waited in the back parlor for a summons, and presently stepped nearer to the gaslight to see if her eyes did not deceive her, in regard to the name on the card at which she was gazing.

"Robert L. Chilton." That could certainly mean none other than Elsie's father! what possible errand could have brought him thither? He had never honored them with a call since their return to the city. Mrs. Remington had met him but once in all these months, and then was recognized only by the coldest and most formal of bows. She felt embarrassed and troubled at the thought of meeting him. She feared that his errand portended some fresh annoyance to Elsie. Did he know, she wondered, that his daughter and her dearest friend met very often under her roof, and did he possibly resent her attempts to smooth the hardness of the path he had obliged Elsie to tread? She drew herself up proudly as she thought of it. If he had come to lecture her, he

would discover that he had chosen the wrong person. Poor Elsie might be his victim, if she would; for herself, she would speak plain truths if he gave her an opportunity. Certainly she had no fear of Mr. Chilton. Then she went forward to meet him; a very dignified little woman, bristling inwardly with a desire to speak her mind; the more she thought about it, really tempted to hope that she should have an opportunity.

His first words disarmed her. "Good-evening, Mrs. Remington. Would it be possible for me to see your husband for a few moments? I have a very great — need — to have a little talk with him."

He hesitated before that word "need," and seemed to use it advisedly. Had he asked to have his daughter Elsie brought to him immediately, that he might cloak, bonnet and carry her home like a disgraced child, or had he asked to have Earle Mason presented before him that he might horse-whip him, Mrs. Remington felt that she would have been prepared. But to ask in tones which were actually almost tremulous if he might see her husband, embarrassed her; she knew not what to do or say. She stammered out some incoherent reply, and finally succeeded in seating her guest; then she went with all haste to John.

"Mr. Chilton?" he said, stopping in his frolic with little John, to hear his wife's words; "why certainly, my dear! I shall be glad to see him.

You may show him up at once ; but I think perhaps you would better take little John away. He may entertain him too vigorously."

So little John, to his grief, was consigned to Jane, and Mr. Chilton was escorted to the bright room, where Mrs. Remington left him with her husband and betook herself in a bewildered frame of mind to the dining-room. She was clear in regard to only one point ; namely, that she would keep silence as to who was John's guest, lest all sorts of surmises might be awakened in Elsie's mind, and her visit be spoiled. Meantime she could not keep herself from wondering what was going on upstairs ; and her wonderment would have deepened had she been there.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"OTTISSEY FIRST."

"HOW do you do, sir?" Mr. Remington had said in the old cheery tones which his caller remembered so well; and he had reached forth his hand as he spoke. "I cannot rise to meet you, you see, but I am very glad to welcome you. Draw your chair nearer the grate, will you not? The night is very cold, they tell me."

Thus much Mrs. Remington had heard before she closed the door. She had heard no reply; neither indeed had Mr. Remington.

Mr. Chilton, who looked much older than the younger man had imagined him, and who had apparently grown feeble, dropped himself into the depths of the easy-chair, and said not one word.

This was embarrassing, but his host talked on, resolved to give him time to recover his breath, if that was what was amiss with him. "The winter has finally set in with great severity. They tell me the sleighing is very good; and judging from the clouds there is a prospect of still more snow. Is not that an unusual state of things in this region?"

Still no reply. It was growing very embarrassing. Mr. Remington turned to keep his eyes upon his guest, whose chair was a little in the shadow, he having pushed it so that his back was to the firelight.

Was it possible that there were tears in the faded blue eyes?

Presently the old man — I use the adjective advisedly, for he seemed that night an old man — drew his handkerchief and deliberately wiped his eyes, only to have them fill again.

Mr. Remington now regarded him with great concern.

"I beg your pardon, my dear friend," he said with respectful sympathy. "I see that you are in sorrow, and I did not know it. Has any trouble come to you, sir, and can I help you in any way?"

It was so natural for this man to offer help! It flushed his face a little, the moment he had spoken the words, to remember how helpless he was himself; then in another moment he had thought with a little exultant thrill, "I can pray!"

At last Mr. Chilton had found his voice; broken it was, and husky.

"Mr. Remington, I have to beg your pardon. I did not know I was so weak. The sight of you, sir, has unmanned me. I did not realize it was so bad; and I — I do not know how to tell my story; but my heart is all broken down, and my pride, and my remorse is very great. I have had

to come to you ; I was driven to it ! You do not know it, sir, but I was the cause of your terrible injury. I blame myself for it all."

"My dear friend," and Mr. Remington's voice was full of astonishment and incredulity, "how has it been possible for you to work yourself into such an idea as that ? It was some poor drunken creature who arrested my steps ; I felt his shadow following me long before I realized any danger. I know perfectly the slouching gait and the uncouth appearance of the man. I almost think I could recognize him if he were brought before me, though I did not see his face. What has led you to conceive of such a mistaken idea, sir ?"

Mr. Chilton shook his head sorrowfully. "I feel only too sure of it," he said. "I will tell you just how it was. I was present that night when you made your address, down at the lower hall. It was a critical time with us ; there were some political questions at stake which we felt sure would affect our business ; and some of us business men were painfully anxious, and could not but feel that your talk would help turn the vote in the wrong direction for us. We were very much excited ; and I was the next speaker on the programme, chosen to present our side of the question. I felt that a good deal depended upon me, and those who had put me in that position were watching me. My excitement was so great that some of the time I hardly knew what I was saying.

"I spoke very severely of you; not by name, of course, but plainly enough for all present to understand. I spoke more severely, much more, than I had intended; and reflected upon your leaving your legitimate work to dabble in politics. I said a great many things which I afterwards regretted, though I was sincere enough at the time. But I had no idea, not the remotest, what wild passions I was feeding. I thought I was speaking to honorable men; men who would fight with their tongues and their votes only. Coming out of the hall I met a villainous-looking fellow; I knew him as a sort of ringleader of a bad set. Ordinarily, he would have passed me without a word, and I him without recognition; but I wasn't myself that night, and when he said to me, 'Mr. Chilton, what is needed is a little cold lead to settle these meddling parsons,' I replied in my excitement and anger: 'It will come to that before long, I have no doubt.'

"But I had not a thought, Mr. Remington, of the meaning which might be attached to my words; not the faintest idea that they would be applied in any way. And my horror and despair, when I heard the next morning of the terrible crime, can not be imagined by one who has not had it to suffer. Now you know why I feel so sure that I am responsible for your condition, but you cannot know the months of agony which I have spent because of that knowledge."

Mr. Remington responded by a genial smile, and spoke rapidly : "My dear brother Chilton, believe me, you are suffering unnecessarily. We have enough burdens to bear in this world, my friend, without adding to them by our own imaginings. Surely in your quietest moments you feel that something more than a passing remark from an excited gentleman swayed the man who has laid me aside ! It was a deliberately planned and prepared for attack ; and the fellow covered up his retreat with skill, and unquestionably had accomplices to aid him. I cannot think for a moment that a hasty remark, made in the heat of the excitement which follows political debate, had any thing to do with the tragedy of that night. And, brother, let me beg that you will put it away from your thoughts as something with which you did not have to do."

"I cannot," answered Mr. Chilton, with lips which quivered, and he wiped his eyes again, that were dim with tears ; "I cannot put it away ; it haunts me day and night. I know, Mr. Remington, that your life was valuable, that you were doing a great work for the Church, and for the cause of Christianity, and that your motives were pure ; and to think I should have come in and stopped it all, and set you down in your room to live a life that is worse than death, is a terrible thought ! I do not know how you can forgive me, sir, and yet I came to ask you to forgive me."

Mr. Remington shut his lips together suddenly, in a curious, repressive way that he had, and they were almost colorless. His guest had touched a wound, and, as it were, laid it bare for the moment, and set his nerves to trembling. There were dark hours in his days when he felt set aside to a life that was "worse than death." His friends had all been brave before him, and had spoken no such words. But this excited man was thinking only of himself and his pain, and did not realize how he was stabbing the wounds.

There was only a moment of silence. To Mr. Remington it was one of prayer, and then his voice was clear and steady. "My brother, I still think you have made yourself responsible for that which was, in no sense of the word, your work; nevertheless, since you mention the word, let me assure you that if I have anything to forgive, I forgive it freely, fully and with all my soul, as I hope for forgiveness for the many mistakes of my own life. God bless you, brother, and give you in these latter days a perfect understanding of Him who has power to hush all the tumults of this life of ours, and to set our eyes steadily toward the light of home. It is only a little while, my brother. The longest life is a short one, when we remember eternity."

Now the tears dropped unchecked from the faded blue eyes, and Mr. Chilton's voice was very tremulous:

"I cannot feel in that way, Mr. Remington. I have lived a good many more years than you have, and have had what men call a successful life; but it has not been a happy one, sir, and as it nears its close I am very far from happy. I am losing my hold on the present, breaking, physically, before my time; and I feel that I have no hold at all upon the future. I am an officer in the Church, as you know, sir, and I used to think I was a Christian; but it is years since I have had any comfort in the Christian life; and of late, within a very few months indeed, I have begun to feel that I know nothing about it. I look back over my past and I cannot tell where I began to have no deep interest in such matters, or no joy in them. I do not know where the false steps were in the first place, nor how to retrace them. I am a very unhappy man, sir, and since this terrible affliction has come upon you I have not seen a quiet hour. I resolved to day that I could endure it no longer alone; that I must go to some one for help, and that I would come to you and tell you the whole wretched story, and get your advice, if there is anything that I can do to"—

"Begin again, brother," interrupted Mr. Remington, his voice full of tender sympathy; "never mind the past; the story of our past is wretched enough, always; if we had to get our comfort from that, we would be 'of all men most miserable.' Never mind how far back the first false step was

taken ; let it all go, and come to Jesus Christ. Give all the mistakes and the miseries into his keeping, and take his righteousness in their place. Never mind whether you were a Christian a year ago, or two years ago, or forty years ago, be a Christian now, to-night. Give yourself to the Lord just as though this were your and his first contract together, and live for to-day and to-morrow ; not for yesterday. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only friend to whom we can come in this way ; all others need explanations, but he knows the whole story so much better than we do that all he asks is the longing cry of the soul, reaching out after him. Brother Chilton, will you get down on your knees, here and now, and give yourself to Christ in everlasting covenant ?"

There was a moment of intense silence, such as could be felt, then the one who could kneel bowed himself before the Lord, and the other with head bowed on his hand, began to pray.

Mrs. Remington and her guests lingered long at the dinner table that evening ; she, with her ears attent for her husband's bell. On the new programme by which the family ordered its life, it was set down that when Mr. Remington had a caller whose business was not personal, and whom it would be pleasant to meet socially, or when he was disengaged and ready for company, he was to touch the bell which connected him with the back parlor ; then any one who belonged to the family,

or any guest so familiar as to be almost included in the family, could go up to the bright room if he chose and help make a family circle. Moreover, since little John had arrived at the dignity of sitting up until seven o'clock, it had been the custom to gather in the father's room soon after the dinner hour, for family worship.

On this evening, after they had at last adjourned to the parlor, Mrs. Remington listened and wondered. Could Mr. Chilton be making so long a stay, or had Jane attended him to the door? If so, why did not her husband's bell ring? What could have been the object of the call? If the guest were still there, he must be wearing John out; and his errand must be private or somebody would be called to help entertain him. Once she went half-way up the stairs resolved to see how matters were, but returned to the parlor irresolute. It might be a private matter; and Mr. Chilton was a strange man. Twice she opened her lips to suggest to Mr. Porter that perhaps Mr. Remington would like to see him, and decided that she would not. Meantime, she entertained two ladies who called to inquire how the invalid was, and went to the hall to be interviewed by Dan Stokes, who was Mr. Remington's devoted friend, I might almost say slave; and who never let a day go by without calling to see if there was anything he could do to serve this family. Very often, indeed, he was shown into the upper room, and had a

helpful little talk with "his minister," as he always called Mr. Remington.

"Good-evening, Mr. Stokes," Mrs. Remington said. "We are all very well to-night, thank you; and there is nothing special to be done, except to mail these letters, if you please. I cannot ask you upstairs, I think Mr. Remington has a caller; but I will give him your message and tell him you are as faithful as ever." Then she returned to the parlor, smiling. "Dan Stokes is a constant joy and rest to my husband," she explained to Mr. Porter; "'Mr. Remington's brand,' Dr. Fletcher calls him. How can people, looking on at the transformation in such lives as his, and Philip King's, and a host of others, for that matter, doubt the power of God to save to the uttermost?"

Just then Mr. Remington's bell sounded, and she turned quickly toward the hall, little John close at her side. "You would better not come up," she said, "until I ring; I do not know whether Mr. Remington wishes us all to-night or not. He had a caller while we were at dinner; but if I ring the bell in a few minutes, you may consider yourselves invited up to prayers." Perhaps ten minutes passed, and once more the bell gave its summons.

"There!" said Elsie, rising briskly from the piano, where her fingers had been idly toying with the keys while she talked to Earle Mason, who was looking through piles of music for a favorite

song, "now the rest of the children can go up-stairs. Come, Aunt Hannah."

Mrs. Remington threw open the door to receive them; but on the threshold Elsie paused, her fair face slowly flushing even to her temples. Could that be her father sunken in the depths of the easy-chair, very near Mr. Remington? How old and worn he looked, yet there was a peculiar light in his eyes and a strangely subdued expression on his face. Why was he here? And was he going to remain to family worship? How very strange! It is true it was the habit of the house to invite any guest who called at this hour to join with them; but that it should be her father was almost beyond belief.

"Come in," said Mrs. Remington, smiling; "and for little John's sake, we must make our service brief to-night; it is already past seven, and the 'sand man' must be very near the door. Aunt Hannah, you remember Mr. Chilton, I think? Reverend Mr. Porter, Mr. Chilton. Now, Elsie, sing: 'Blest be the tie that binds.'"

It was Mr. Remington's voice which led in the prayer that followed the song, and Elsie's tears dropped fast as she listened to his petitions for the "brother pilgrim whose feet had trodden the paths of earth longer than any of theirs; and who had this night set his face anew toward the sunlight, with fixed purpose of heart from this time forth to be entirely the Lord's."

Could he possibly mean her father? Or was he speaking of some other caller who had been there that day; for Elsie Chilton knew that this upper chamber was becoming a very bethel for tried souls; yet certainly the prayer sounded as if the one prayed for was close at hand. Had something wonderful and beautiful happened to her? It was a very tender prayer; like a son holding converse with the Father he loved; like a brother drawing into close fellowship with the Elder Brother; and there was an undertone of jubilation in it that did not escape the ears of any present.

The moment they arose from their knees word came that Mr. Porter was being waited for downstairs, and he excused himself at once.

Mr. Mason went forward, bowing to Mr. Chilton as he passed, and bent over Mr. Remington's chair with the usual inquiries as to his welfare and commands; for Mr. Remington called Earle Mason his telephone communication with the other world. Elsie advanced timidly, uncertain what to say to her father; she had little John by the hand; she wondered if her father had noticed him; he used to love little children; and there had been a little boy who died, around whom his heart strings had twined; but that was long ago; and he had of late been so cold to her that she hardly knew how to approach him.

"Good-evening, papa," she began, and then little John took matters into his own hands. With

a firm placing of his slippered foot on the lounging chair, he said with grave decision, "Little John will sit with this Grandpa"; and without further words mounted upon Mr. Chilton's knee. Aunt Hannah looked dismayed and took a step forward to relieve their guest, but by that time Mr. Chilton's arm was around the boy, and with his gray head touching the yellow curls he was whispering softly to him, little John listening with a pleased air of condescension and approval. Aunt Hannah turned away with a relieved smile; there was no accounting for little John's movements, and there were no hearts apparently which he did not steal.

A moment more, and Earle Mason lifted himself from his brief conference with the head of the house, and said as he looked at his watch: "Well, good friends, if there is nothing I can do for any of you I must be excused, I think. I am to take the nine o'clock hour at the Mission to-night, and I shall not have much more than time to reach there. I will report to you in the morning, sir," turning again to Mr. Remington, "how that matter stands; and will make the statement to the committee to-night which you suggested. Now, little John, will you give me a kiss for good-night?"

Little John puckered his rosy lips into the form of a kiss, and was just about to graciously grant the favor, when his eye alighted upon Elsie standing beside her father, one hand resting on the arm

of his chair; and his fertile brain prepared on the instant a new programme.

"Kiss Ottissey first," he said gravely; and Elsie's fair face, from which the color had receded, now flamed into scarlet again, as she caught the flash in Mr. Remington's eyes, and the look of surprise, not unmingled with satisfaction, upon his wife's face. The only perfectly composed person in the room was little John. With distinctness and gravity he reiterated his command: "Kiss Ottissey first." Every one present save Mr. Chilton knew perfectly who "Ottissey" was, and the flash of intelligence upon Mr. Remington's face, as well as the look upon Earle Mason's, told the keen-eyed old man just what the command meant.

"She will not let me, little John," said Earle Mason, in utmost gravity. "I would be very glad to do so, but she will not allow it."

"Yes," said little John in positive tones, "she will; won't you, Ottissey? It is naughty not to let people kiss you when they want to very bad; isn't it, this Grandpa?" and he patted with condescending touch the trembling hand which supported him.

Mr. Chilton had not been a courtly, self-possessed society gentleman for more than forty years, for nothing. This was an eventful evening to him; tremendous interests had been at stake, tremendous decisions had been made; some already expressed upon his knees, and some that he had

meant to express very soon. He had not expected to be quite so prompt, nor to have so large an audience; yet he was quick-witted; here was little John's appeal; here was his opportunity; he rose to the occasion.

"She is my little girl," he said, "my boy," and his voice had a world of tenderness in it; "and she is a good little girl; she tries always to do as her father says."

Little John was equal to the situation. "And will you tell her to let my Mr. Mason kiss her first?" he asked with the slow dignity of a sovereign waiting for the decision of a subject.

"Yes," said Mr. Chilton, "I will;" and reaching for Elsie's hand he placed it within that of Earle Mason.

And Earle Mason, entirely willing to obey, bent his head and kissed "Ottissey first"; while his royal highness drew a sigh of satisfaction at the loyalty of all his subjects.

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